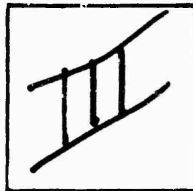


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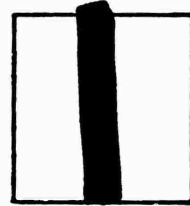
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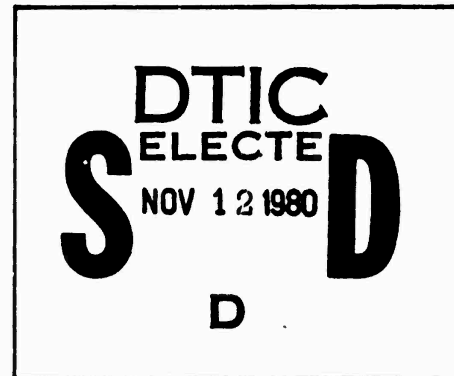
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THE MERCENARY PHENOMENON IN  
THE WESTERN MILITARY  
TRADITION

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements of the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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The Mercenary Phenomenon in the Western Military Tradition

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the individual student author and do not necessarily represent the views of either the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

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## PREFACE

The original inspiration for this treatise came from the Report of the President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force,<sup>1</sup> also known as the Gates' Commission report. The Commission's report unanimously recommends an all-volunteer force. It anticipates and answers nine possible objections to its recommendation. Three of these objections have to do with the mercenary theme. First, an all-volunteer force will undermine the traditional belief that each citizen has a moral responsibility to serve his country. Second, men of the lowest economic classes will join such a force, primarily for monetary reasons. "An all-volunteer-force would be manned, in effect, by mercenaries."<sup>2</sup> Third, an all-volunteer-force would become isolated from the national life and may lead to governmental independence from checks and balances in its use.

The Commission agrees that the draft is an unjust "tax-in-kind" where the draftee is subject to a double jeopardy in that he is legally obliged to endanger his life but at a low wage. To do justice, military wages must be raised sufficiently to induce volunteers in great enough numbers to insure the national defense and the tax burden spread throughout the population.

Whatever the merits of these arguments, this treatise does not seek to take issue with the Commission's report but uses it as a starting point into a vastly interesting and yet little explored area of human endeavor.

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<sup>1</sup>The President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1970).

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 16.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this treatise is to determine the essence and role of mercenaries in the western tradition. The approach is to delineate, analyze and compare mercenary phenomena in their various settings from their ancient European forms around the Mediterranean Sea to the early 20th century. The term mercenary is applied to a variety of historical situations which do not appear to have elements in common. This treatise attempts to provide a basis for insight into the mercenary phenomena of history and for a more precise use of the word in describing mercenary situations. (author)

#### Hypothesis

The hypothesis used in this treatise is based on an extended concept of mercenary: specifically that mercenary situations are characterized by, (1) all or most of physical, social, economic, cultural and political isolation from the employer, (2) autonomy of the hirer over the mercenaries, (3) monetary reward of the mercenaries, (4) professionalism on the part of the mercenaries, (5) an ideological element in the mercenary situation. This hypothesis is developed more explicitly as follows: the extended concept of mercenary contains two general parts. The first part contains the three necessary components of the mercenary phenomenon. They are termed necessary because they establish the mercenary situation. The first and most important of these is isolation of the mercenary from the society or body hiring him. Isolation may be any or all of cultural, economic, social,

political and physical. The second necessary component is autonomy. Autonomy can reside in the employer or in the mercenary force. It consists of the power of one to impose its will on the other. Autonomy is a dynamic tension, a struggle for freedom of action with regard to the other. It includes special control measures used by hirers to preserve their autonomy. The third necessary component of the mercenary phenomenon is monetary. This component is the most obvious aspect of any mercenary situation and is what we usually mean when we apply the term mercenary. The exchange of money establishes a mercenary relationship when the components of isolation and autonomy are present. Changing the amount of money does not alter the mercenary situation although on occasions it will create mercenaries where isolation and autonomy do not favor them.

The role of isolation and autonomy in the mercenary phenomenon is critical because of the way they interact with one another. Isolation appears to have a distinct influence over autonomy. The greater the isolation, the greater autonomy the hirer has in the use of his mercenaries because society imposes fewer restraints. Similarly, the greater the isolation, the fewer are the controls the employer must use to preserve his autonomy. The less the isolation, the less is the autonomy of the hirer and the greater are the controls he must use to preserve his autonomy.

The second part of the mercenary concept contains the two relative components which may exist in a mercenary situation. These components are not always essential but their discussion often assists in clarifying and delineating a mercenary situation. The first and



most important is professionalism. Professionalism frequently merges with mercenarism and distinguishing between them becomes a matter of judgment. Professionals in the art of war always share in some degree in the necessary components of the mercenary phenomenon. They are not, therefore, mercenaries but are entitled to pay and are subject to a degree of isolation and autonomy as a natural consequence of their professional condition. Professionalism is defined as expertise in the management of military units and equipment coupled with a sense of corporate identity.<sup>1</sup> Technical proficiency in the use of weapons is an element of, but does not fully constitute professionalism.

The second relative component is ideology and comprises the reasons other than monetary which impel the mercenary to fight and the reasons the society or hiring body has for hiring mercenaries.

#### Historical Periods

There are five historical periods to which this hypothesis is applied:

The first covers the ancient world and extends from the earliest Greek mercenaries about 600 BC, through the Peloponnesian Wars, the march up country, Alexander's conquests, the wars with Carthage and the Roman Army of the Western Empire to the Battle of Adrianople in 378 AD.

The second includes the Middle Ages until about 1300 and shows how mercenaries evolved from feudal institutions.

The third period is the Italian Renaissance, where modern governments first appeared and where condottieri and mercenaries flourished. It begins in 1300 and ends in 1494.

The Early Modern period covers the great mercenary wars of 16th-century France, Germany, and England until the French Revolution.

4

The fifth period describes the evolution of the national armies and the wars of Europe until 1940.

This treatise does not include the mercenary phenomena which resulted from the colonial experience of the Great Powers. The colonial manifestations of mercenarism were outside the western tradition and European forms.

#### Related Definitions and Concepts

In delineating the mercenary phenomenon this treatise uses a standard definition of mercenary. The mercenary phenomena of history frequently overlap with related concepts and phenomena which must be clarified.

The term mercenary has a constant meaning in English, French and Spanish. The word originated from the Latin merces or merced: wages or salary. It means acting merely for reward or pay; actuated by considerations of monetary self-interest, and now professional soldiers serving a foreign power. According to the New English Dictionary on Historic Principles,<sup>2</sup> mercenary has been applied to soldiers since 1580. Contemporary dictionaries specify that it is applied now only to troops serving in foreign armies. Mercenary may be considered the horizontal dimension of the phenomenon.

Mercenary does not refer in this treatise to allies or proxies. In the case of allies and proxies a self-interest exists which is not vitiated by whatever money, weapons or other support they receive from the sponsoring power. Allies and proxies normally fight in local wars and cannot be employed outside of areas where their interest are located.

Prætorianism indicates a military institution which exercises political power, either directly or supports a person nominally in power.<sup>1</sup> It is normally applied to elite troops in this role.

Practorianism is a tendency of mercenaries, especially those commanded by condottieri. However, mercenaries and condottieri do not have a monopoly among different kinds of armies on practorianism. Conscripted and volunteer armies have overthrown governments.

Auxiliary is used in the same sense as Machiavelli used it: ". . . the arms of a powerful foreigner whom you invite to assist you in your defense." The distinction between mercenary troops commanded by condottieri and auxiliaries is not difficult to make because auxiliary troops are commanded by officers loyal to the foreign prince.<sup>4</sup>

This etymological origin of the word soldier is found in English practices around the time of the Norman conquest. In order to bypass the contractual difficulties of the feudal system, the higher mobility contracted with leaders to raise a unit of armed men. These men were called soldiers after the Latin solde or solidus, the coin for which the "s" is the initial in the abbreviation of shilling. It is short mental step from the solidus or soldier to the merces of mercenary.<sup>5</sup>

The term condottieri, of Italian origin, adds the vertical dimension to the mercenary phenomenon. "A professional military leader or captain who raised a troop and sold his services to states or princes at war; the leader of a troop of mercenaries." According to the New English Dictionary on Historical Principles, the word was first used in English in 1744 but the practice to which the word was first applied occurred in Italy in the 14th century.<sup>6</sup>

The same source shows the term "soldier of fortune" used to convey a variety of meanings, none of them directly related to mercenary or condottieri. The term is used in this treatise to convey the idea of an individual who loves war and plunder but is not necessarily professional

in the art of war. Soldiers of fortune do not fall into their mercenary tradition of western Europe.

As used in this treatise, war-entrepreneur refers to an individual who assembles, equips and trains troops for the purpose of selling them to a condottieri or other military leader.

Using the stated hypothesis and the definitions, the treatise will proceed to a comparative analysis of the five historical periods in order to conclude whether the extended concept of mercenary can in fact give precision to the term "mercenary" and insight into "mercenary" situations.

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## CHAPTER II

### ANCIENT MERCENARY TRADITIONS

Ancient military practices around the Mediterranean Sea are important to an understanding of the modern western mercenary phenomenon. The space of history from 600 BC to 400 AD in and around this region is replete with examples of mercenaries from almost all of the ancient civilizations and tribes fighting throughout the Mediterranean littoral. Polybius, the Greek historian of the second century BC, states that before the Punic Wars, Greeks fought Asians or Africans or Romans fought Greeks and Asians.

Roman expansion beginning about the second century BC conquered, absorbed or devastated these many warring elements, linking the Asian, Greek, African and European lands and peoples into a tradition that was fundamentally Roman. The ancient forms were thus consolidated into Roman civilization, administration and military traditions and transmitted some 600 years later to the Europe of the Medieval period.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Greek Mercenary Tradition

The Greek military tradition is especially meaningful to study in regard to mercenaries for four reasons. First, the Greek city states were small and generally speaking, their citizens, officials and the details of their military, political and economic affairs were known to all. Secondly, Greece produced soldiers who found employ in practically every army in the known world. Third, the Greek system produced many types of military establishments from the ideologically

motivated citizen-soldier to the monetary-minded mercenary.

Fourth, Greek men of genius carried out various and extraordinary military feats which were described or analyzed by others in works that are classics.

The ancient period is remarkable for the sheer number and frequency of mercenaries in descriptions of order of battle and expeditions. The earliest examples occurred almost 600 years before Christ, when Greeks hired by King Psammetichus II of Egypt scratched their names on the temple walls at Abusimbel in Upper Egypt on their way to fight in Ethiopia. The Greek empire and culture never extended to Ethiopia and it is probable that those soldiers went there as mercenaries because of promises of pay and plunder. Other early examples are those of three Athenians, Timotheus, Iphacrates and Chabrios who gained fame as professional mercenary generals in the 5th century BC. These generals at times owned and at others merely commanded the troops under them.<sup>2</sup>

Thucydides, the 5th century BC Greek historian, mentions mercenaries repeatedly as forming part of the order of battle of the various engagements in the Peloponnesian wars. His descriptions of order of battle usually show four to five thousand soldiers of various types and nationalities. The mercenary component seldom exceeds, and is usually less than, 1,000 in any case.<sup>3</sup>

The Greeks were users and suppliers of mercenaries. There are numerous examples of Greek soldiers in the employ of foreigners. The most outstanding example of this is the Anabasis of Xenophon. About 300 BC, Cyrus, son of Darius sought to wrest the Persian kingdom from Artaxerxes, his brother. In addition to his own native troops, Cyrus

hired some 10,000 Greek mercenaries. He considered the addition of this relatively large Greek component to his army necessary because of the high reputation and discipline of Greek soldiers. The majority of the Greek mercenaries were hired directly by Cyrus. The remainder were hired by Clearchus, a Greek commander renowned for raising, training and commanding armies, commanded the Greek contingent for Cyrus.<sup>4</sup>

At one point about 400 Greek mercenaries in the employ of Abrocomas, one of Artaxerxes' generals, deserted to Cyrus. The mercenary escapades of Xenophon's 10,000 came full swing two years after they had begun the march up country in the employ of Cyrus, a Persian, when they returned to Greek territory. First, they were hired by Seuthes, a minor Thracian king to recapture his lost territories. Then the Spartans, who had gained ascendancy in Greece hired them for a campaign against Tissaphernes and other Persians in Asia Minor.<sup>5</sup>

Dionysius of Syracuse provides another example of the Greek mercenary tradition in the mid fourth century BC. Using Greek troops and Italian mercenaries Dionysius was able to halt Carthaginian expansion against the Greek cities of Sicily. His mercenary force appears not to have exceeded 1,000. One of the mainstays of Dionysius' secure 38 year reign was the constant presence near his person of his mercenary bodyguard. At one point in Dionysius' reign the citizens of Syracuse revolted against him. He was able to recall some 1,200 Italian mercenaries from a distant place where they had settled and with their help, put down the rebellion.<sup>6</sup>

During the 10 years of Alexander the Great's expedition into Asia from 333 to 323 BC, he used and was in turn opposed by Greek



mercenaries. Alexander entered Asia with a mixed force of cavalry, light and heavy infantry, archers and slingers reckoned at approximately 37,000 men. Of this force 5,000 were mercenaries. He was opposed by an army of about 40,000 men, of whom 20,000 were Greek mercenaries in the employ of Darius, the King of Persia. The Persian army's elements were commanded by a group of Satraps of Asia Minor and one element by Mannon of Rhodes, a renowned Greek mercenary general.

In his campaign in eastern Asia Minor, Alexander forced the surrender of Melitos, garrisoned by Greek mercenaries and commanded by a Greek general, Hegesistratos. A short time later, Alexander laid siege to Helicarnassus, an undertaking that was only partly successful. He left a garrison of Greek mercenaries there when he moved on.<sup>8</sup>

The battle of Issos took place on a narrow plain, the control of which gave Alexander access to Asia proper. Darius opposed an estimated 100,000 men of whom 15,000 were Greek mercenary infantry, to Alexander's 25,000 to 30,000 Greeks. Darius expected these mercenaries to hold the center of his line. Their failure to hold resulted in the route of Darius' entire army.<sup>9</sup>

Alexander's relentless pursuit of Darius and the latter's repeated defeats gradually caused all of his followers to abandon him. As Darius retreated further to the east, he was left with only a small personal following and a band of faithful Greek mercenaries. These mercenaries were the last to abandon him before he was assassinated. They probably saw in him their only protection from Alexander.<sup>10</sup>

The employment of mercenaries in the political struggles within the city states was a fairly frequent practice. Greek city states typically had an oligarchic and a democratic party. When opposition

between these parties reached the pitch of armed conflict, the oligarchic party usually hired mercenaries, either Greek or foreign, whereas the democratic party relied on its own numbers for fighting manpower.

During the Peloponnesian war, the oligarchic and democratic parties of Corcyra offered the slaves their freedom. Most slaves sided with the democrats. In order to regain control the oligarchic party hired 800 mercenaries. The democrats eventually gained control of the city and the oligarchs and their mercenaries retired to a nearby stronghold. A similar alliance of oligarchs and mercenaries existed in Ephesus when Alexander laid siege to the city.<sup>11</sup>

The decline in Greek military power following the death of Alexander in 323 BC was not accompanied by a disappearance of Greek mercenaries from the armies of the Mediterranean world.

The Romans had been victorious in a series of land and naval battles in Sicily in the mid third century BC and had landed an army in the vicinity of Carthage under the command of Regulus. This army consisted of about 15,000 infantry and 500 cavalry and promptly beat a Carthaginian army of Gallic, Numidian, Balearic and other mercenaries. The Carthaginians had sent ambassadors to Greece to raise more mercenaries. With the Greek mercenaries came Xanthippus, a Lacedaemonian. Xanthippus took charge of the Carthaginian army and defeated the Romans. The example of Xanthippus is just one of a seemingly endless procession of Greek mercenaries mentioned by Polybius fighting in Greece, Persia, Syria, Sicily and Egypt.<sup>12</sup>

Greek society contained a spectrum of fighting people; those who fought in time of need because of a citizen's obligation and those

who fought constantly because it was their calling. Mercenaries attained fame and even became heroes but references to mercenaries are with few exceptions devoid of qualifications. They are simply called mercenaries. Mercenaries were usually foot soldiers in the pay of a leader and in a venture where they have only a monetary interest. Their leaders were rarely named. Mercenaries, social status was low and of such a nature that details were not important. They infrequently distinguished themselves by a proficiency in some special skill in the profession of arms. Thucydides occasionally refers to mercenaries as being foreign or alien. He appears to consider a foreigner as a barbarian or non Greek and an alien is a Greek from another city-state.

The quasi-anonymity of an ever present mercenary phenomenon was probably the result of a fear of them and the low esteem in which they were held. Unless they distinguished themselves by some signal service, they were little noticed and their loss was mourned by few. This identification of the relationship between mercenaries and Greek society demonstrates the characteristic of isolation.

Mercenaries were sharply distinguished from other troops both as to function and nationality. In his accounts Thucydides repeatedly mentions the city of origin of the troops, their citizen or volunteer status and their function, such as cavalry, archer, light or heavy infantry. Order of battle is often capped-off with a terse mention of a given number of anonymous mercenaries. Even Xenophon, who, unlike the impersonal accounts of Thucydides, had a very personal relationship with his men and was in fact an elected leader, only occasionally mentions the origins of his men.

The isolation of the Greek mercenaries is evident in other ways. Culturally, Greek mercenaries were clearly not part of their environment when they fought for Cyrus, Darius and the Carthaginians under Xanthippus. Equally clear is the fact that Illyrian, Italian or Thracian mercenaries in Greek employ were not considered Hellenic and had no opportunity to become Greek.

In his bid for power, Dionysius secured a foreign mercenary bodyguard for himself. His purpose here was to protect himself and maintain power by means of an armed group that was isolated culturally, politically and socially from the citizens of Syracuse.<sup>14</sup>

The Greeks had their own way of isolating their countrymen who took up arms against the wrong party or were in the pay of the wrong party. For example, Xenophan was exiled from Athens for his role against Athens in the battle of Coroneia.<sup>15</sup>

Alexander's severe treatment of the Greek mercenaries after the battle of the Granicos, where he first engaged Darius' army in Asia Minor, again shows the Greek attitude toward Greek mercenaries who fought against Greeks. Those who were not massacred, out of an original 20,000, numbered about 2,000, and were sent to Macedonia to do forced labor.<sup>16</sup>

Thucydides does not mention the origin of the mercenaries who were employed by the Corcyrean oligarchs. The oligarchic party and their mercenaries were treated with special severity when they fell into the hands of the democrats. The men were all killed and the women sold into slavery.<sup>17</sup>

Greek warfare was expeditionary and heroic. Armed men were about at all times but there existed nothing like the standing armies

of Roman or early modern times. When it was necessary to go to war, an army was assembled. What this force consisted of depended as much on the reason, money, types and nationalities of troops available as on what was, in fact, necessary to carry out the expedition.

The Greeks probably preferred citizen or allied forces in their armies because they were more easily controlled and used mercenaries with reservation for specific purposes and in guarded proportions to the national troops. Mercenaries appeared not to form more than one-third of a Greek order of battle. Usually their proportion was between ten and twenty percent. This suggests that the Greeks were aware of the problem of controlling mercenaries. The almost total dependence of the Corcyrean oligarchs on mercenaries resulted in disaster. The disobedience and possible faithlessness of the mercenaries caused the entire group to be delivered to the Corcyrean democrats. This bespeaks a certain lack of autonomy on the part of the oligarchs.<sup>18</sup>

In assembling forces, the Greeks normally used deliberate and calculated controls to preserve their autonomy. Mercenaries seldom occupied a controlling role in Greek armies in terms of numbers or function, as their order of battle indicates. Another technique for preserving autonomy was the hiring of mercenaries for specialized functions. Xenophon speaks of Cretan bowmen and Thucydides of Cretan bowmen and Rhodian slingers. By the special nature of their skills, these troops could add great power to an army and not threaten its leadership. An indirect Greek technique of gaining autonomy was the hiring of mercenaries for the purpose of depriving the enemy of their services and, thereby, neutralizing them. The Lacedaemonians

considered offering high salaries to Greek sailors for the three-fold purpose of building up the skill of their navy, of weakening the Athenians, and of sparing their own manpower.<sup>19</sup>

The distinction between professional soldiers and mercenaries was in all probability a difficult one to make. When speaking of foreigners, one could make the judgment easily but not so with allies or Greeks from other city-states. Xenophan, for example, was not a mercenary, but rather a professional soldier to the Athenians until he fought against them at Coroneia. Thereafter, he was a mercenary.

In the mid-fourth century BC, the Athenians relied on professional generals. One of these, Timotheus, was wealthy and served only Athens. Another, Iphacrates, although Athenian, fought in the service of a Thracian king against Athens for a period. Iphacrates, like Xenophan, was a professional and a mercenary.<sup>20</sup>

It cannot be said that mercenaries or their citizen counterparts whether in a leadership role or simply serving in the line differed greatly in professionalism. Mercenaries were frequently hired because citizens preferred to give their money than to serve personally. Nevertheless, there were many citizens who served competently for long periods.<sup>21</sup>

Mercenary ideology seems to be driven by the desire for money and was highly capitalistic in the case of generals who recruited, trained and led their armies. Ferrero, an Italian political scientist of the early 20th century, suggests that it was the business of war in the ancient world to free and distribute accumulated capital.<sup>22</sup>

The severity with which mercenaries in general and especially Greek mercenaries were treated by the Greeks shows the Hellenic

ideology. The Corcyrean oligarchs and their mercenaries were exterminated and their women sold into slavery. Alexander's massacre of Greeks in the hire of Darius again reveals this attitude. The true Greek attitude towards mercenaries appears to be summed up by Aristotle:

"He who by his nature and not simply by his ill-luck has no city, no state, is either too bad or too good, either sub-human or superhuman, like the war-mad man condemned in Homer's words 'having no family, no morals, no home;' such a person is by his nature mad on war, he is a noncooperator, like an isolated piece in a game of draughts."<sup>23</sup>

### The Carthaginian Mercenary Tradition

The Carthaginian military tradition is practically synonymous with her mercenary tradition. This remark does not apply to the navy or the military commanders, who were citizens. Unlike Greek armies, Carthaginian armies were composed almost entirely of mercenaries or allies. This institutional arrangement probably came about because Carthage originated as a settlement of the Phoenicians who continued their tradition of maritime commerce. They probably had neither the inclination nor the manpower for armies.<sup>24</sup>

The western mediterranean conflict between Carthage and Rome provided a perfect setting for the study of mercenary forces. In the late third century BC, the two powers were nearly equal in strength but quite different in their military systems. Rome was a land power whose army was composed of citizens. It had only recently begun to expand beyond the Italian peninsula into Sicily. Carthage was a naval power whose armies were hired and who had colonies throughout the western Mediterranean Sea.

Xanthippus and the Greek mercenaries who assisted the Carthaginians in beating Regulus' legions have already been discussed. The Roman legions besieging Lilybaeum, a Carthaginian city in western Sicily, attempted to gain entry by subverting the Carthaginian's Greek mercenaries. A Greek mercenary, Alexo, warned the Carthaginian commander who was able to save the situation. A short time later, Greek mercenaries acting on their own initiative, set fire to the Roman siege machines and saved the day.<sup>25</sup>

Amilcar, who was appointed commander of the Carthaginian force opposing the rebellious Carthaginian mercenary armies, which had been transported from Sicily to Carthage, raised an army of 10,000 mercenaries and deserters to put down the rebellion. Hannibal, the famous Carthaginian general, at the battle of Zama, the decisive battle in North Africa which decided the fate of Carthage, formed his front lines of 12,000 mercenaries of at least four different nationalities. Behind this front line were subject African troops and the Carthaginian cavalry. These mercenaries, suspecting that they were not supported by the native Carthaginians and their allies, turned upon them under pressure of the Roman legions. Hannibal was thus defeated at Zama by his own mercenaries as well as the Romans.<sup>26</sup>

Polybius, a second century BC historian, mentions Carthaginian mercenaries only in Africa and Sicily. Troops used by the Carthaginians in Spain, Gaul and Italy were in most cases allies against Rome. In preparing for his invasion of Italy, Hannibal made elaborate preparations to insure the allegiance of the Gauls who held the northern frontier of Italy and who supported him during the 16 years of his campaign in Italy. Asdrubal, the Carthaginian commander in Spain, who commanded army that



lost to Scipio, the Roman consul in Spain, had an army composed of allies. It is probable that a standing nucleus of mercenaries of various nationalities was the core of these forces. Hannibal's third line at Zama was made up of troops he had brought from Italy.<sup>27</sup>

The Carthaginians had a practice during these times which was very similar in several respects to the Greek practice of hiring specialized mercenaries to fill out their order of battle. The Balearic Islands were the source of slingers to Carthaginian armies just as Rhodes provided slingers and Crete provided archers for the Greeks. In both cases the specialized mercenaries came from islands. It is probable that the training and hiring out of mercenaries had become industries on these islands.<sup>28</sup>

A high point of the Carthaginian experience with mercenaries is the African War in the second century BC. Upon the signing of a peace treaty with Rome, the Carthaginians embarked their mercenary force of some 20,000 from Sicily to Carthage. The embarkation was carried out in small groups and over a period of time so that the mercenaries could be paid upon arrival in Carthage, where they were expected to spend their gold, and then reembarked to their country of origin. Funds were not available and the entire force eventually gathered at Carthage. This situation took its natural course. Two mercenaries, Spendius and Matho, emerged leaders of this force and succeeded in provoking the unpaid and rebellious mercenaries to some serious crimes, and finally war broke out. The subsequent African War seriously weakened Carthage. Its suppression required her best generalship, considerable loss of manpower, and immense quantities of gold to achieve victory.<sup>29</sup>

The Carthaginians hired a limited proportion of mercenaries from a single country in order to prevent conspiracies that might spread throughout the army. Hannibal used this technique successfully during his 16 years in Italy. The Carthaginians were thus sensitive to the same problem which occupied Greek commanders raising forces for an expedition. Mercenaries did not make up a large proportion of Greek order of battle and no nationality made up a large proportion of Carthaginian order of battle.<sup>30</sup>

It is interesting to speculate why Hannibal, who had successfully managed a mixed force of mercenaries of various nationalities and allies for 16 years in Italy against the greatest odds, was ultimately unable to control a mixed force of mercenaries, his veterans from Italy and native Carthaginians at Zama. It is possible that the mercenaries on the front line perceived that the issue was in their hands, in somewhat the same way as the mercenaries of the African War perceived that they held real power and had a just grievance. Had Hannibal placed the Carthaginians or Italian veterans in the front line, or adequately supported the mercenaries there, the results might have been different.

As long as Carthage's mercenaries fought outside of her territory in Africa, they were isolated politically, socially and culturally from their employers and fought effectively and often victoriously. Carthaginian autonomy appeared complete and effective and the mercenaries faithfully served Carthaginian interests. As soon as Carthaginian mercenaries were introduced into her home territories isolation was eliminated in a physical sense, and autonomy became a serious problem. In the African War, autonomy passed to the unpaid

mercenaries and was not regained by Carthage without great effort. In the African War, cultural and social as well as physical isolation was absent. When the leaders, Spendius and Matho, mobilized the horde, political isolation also disappeared and with it all power of control by the state of Carthage. The same phenomenon may have taken place at Zama; Hannibal's autonomy was weakened by causes we do not know completely. His front line mercenaries turned upon the Carthaginians in the second line and killed or dispersed them. Hannibal failed to perceive the state of mind of his mercenaries who had possibly recognized their pivotal role in the battle and decided to change sides. The front line mercenaries consisted of at least four different nationalities. It is significant that they acted as a group, despite the diversity of their origins. Here again the autonomy of the hirer passed to the mercenaries.

At Zama the mercenary captains were ordered to fill their troops with spirit for the coming battle and each did so in the language of his troops. The control measures designed to preserve Carthaginian autonomy, in bringing together the mercenary captains for their instructions on Carthaginian soil, could have fused them ideologically against their masters. The possible sequence of events in this disaster was initially a loss of isolation of the mercenaries leading to their gaining ideological unity and autonomy.<sup>31</sup>

#### Rome and the Mercenary Phenomenon

No treatment of the ancient mercenary tradition can be complete without some discussion of Rome's relation to it. The Roman Empire and army possessed many superficial and one distinctive characteristic of the ancient mercenary tradition but were in fact outside

of it. The ultimate condition of the Roman legions in the fourth century AD, often described as mercenary, had only isolation in common with Greek and Carthaginian mercenaries. The establishing monetary component was not present and problems of autonomy did not exist.

The legions of the Republic which drove the Carthaginians out of Sicily in the second century BC, fought off Hannibal and ultimately conquered Carthage, Greece and Africa were made up of citizens of Italy. Certain servile occupations and unpropertied classes did not serve. In the late second century BC, military service was a privilege and right of the propertied Roman classes.<sup>32</sup>

In 102 BC, the population census was abolished as the base for recruiting for the legions. After this change, levies were imposed and it became possible to buy substitutes. By the beginning of the Empire, the army was drawn from practically all classes of Roman society, with some drawn from subject countries. But a significant change had come over the army. It was no longer the army of the Romans but the army of the Emperor. The military took an oath of allegiance to the person of the Emperor, not the state.<sup>33</sup>

These two changes set the scene for an evolution in the armies and the government that produced four hundred years later an army devoid of the civic pride earlier so characteristic of Republican Legions. The armies and for a period the Praetorian guard were the key to the problem of succession. A powerful and pervasive bureaucracy, begun by Augustus developed and ultimately competed with the armies for power. A hereditary caste system appeared which immobilized certain classes, among them the military. The sheer size and diversity of the Empire caused the Emperor to subdivide the provinces in order to regulate

business and prevent civil wars. The citizenship was extended to barbarians who served in the legions and a series of institutions were devised to populate and guard the frontiers. The levy system was finally extended to slaves.

The army's role in Imperial succession began upon the death of Augustus (27 BC - 14 AD) who had foreseen the military factor in succession. Augustus had taken the measure of balancing the imperial legions, used in foreign ventures, against the city and provincial auxiliaries, a defensive force. For this reason also he had neglected to create a strategic reserve and had halved the 60 legions of the army.<sup>34</sup>

These measures were unsuccessful. The armies almost immediately perceived their role in imperial succession. Tiberius, who succeeded Augustus in 14 AD, felt obliged to personally notify commanders of his accession and later, when mutinies broke out, to give the troops a special interest in his imperium by giving them extra pay. Under Tiberius begins the praetorian factor in succession. Sejanus, prefect of the Praetorian Guard held great personal influence with Tiberius. Four of the first five emperors were nominees of the army and in particular of the Praetorian Guard.<sup>35</sup>

With occasional periods of tranquility under the Flavians and the Antonines (138-192 AD), the power of selection, tenure and termination of an imperial reign alternated between the armies in the field and the Praetorian Guard. The period from 69 until 312 AD is one of an almost endless series of regicides by the guard or by the army.<sup>36</sup>

Emperors who attempted to change this system were quickly dispatched. Pertinax who was chosen by the guard, attempted to instill

discipline and thus won the disfavor of the guard and was murdered by them in 193 AD. Such was the reputation of the office for leading to the death of emperors at one point that no contender came forward. The Imperium was therefore auctioned for a substantial sum to each member of the Praetorian Guard.<sup>37</sup>

Septimius Severus who followed Pertinax in 193 AD added new and significant dimensions to the Imperium. At the head of an army he eliminated two rivals and became Emperor, whereupon he systematically began to pamper the army. He abolished Italians in the Praetorian Guard, replacing them with Illyrians. He created a private fund, the res privata for which he was not accountable and which was in addition to his personal estate and public monies. He used the res privata to give the armies a vested interest in his well-being and establish their loyalty to him. Septimius was merely formalizing an imperial practice of long-standing. At least one Emperor was murdered because he was too chary with the res privata. Septimius cemented the armies to the imperium to a degree undreamed of by his predecessors, carrying out to its logical extreme the link between the Emperor and the armies established by Augustus 200 years before. He is credited with saying to his son on his deathbed in 211 AD:

"Be united, enrich the soldiers and scorn the rest."<sup>38</sup>

Diocletian, who ruled from 284 to 305 AD, realized the need for a central reserve force. He reformed and reorganized the army, increasing the number but decreasing the size of the legions and establishing a field army which remained near and under the control of the Emperor. This army was well-trained and equipped. It contained few Romans and consisted mostly of barbarians. The provincial armies were also in the

early 4th century AD composed primarily of barbarians. It is for this reason that the army had become the property of the Emperor, was professional and was filled with barbarians that it was frequently referred to as mercenary.<sup>39</sup>

An evolutionary factor which contributed greatly to the isolation of the army from Roman society was the successive exclusion of classes of Roman society from it and the forcible inclusion of certain classes in it. The army under the Antonines relied for officers upon the propertied classes of Romans. Italians served in the important units of the Legions and in the Praetorian Guard. From the latter were drawn the noncommissioned officers for the army as a whole. Gallienus, who ruled the western Empire from 253 to 268 AD, excluded the senatorial classes from military service. In the 3rd century conscripts found a method of converting their service obligation into a tax, the aurum tironicum. Freedmen, cooks, bakers, tavernkeepers and slaves had always been excluded from military service. In the early 5th century, slaves were called to arms, with the offer of emancipation, to meet an invasion.<sup>40</sup>

A concurrent development within the Empire, started on a modest scale by Augustus but successively added to by each Emperor, was the civil service system. The end result was similar to a police state where the civil service had become a class unto itself and found ways, through regulations which it drew up, to enter into every phase of life and activity of the Empire. The civil service had spies, collected taxes, regulated transportation and a host of other functions. Septimius Severus militarized the theretofore civilian civil service. This was in

keeping with his personality and policy and it added that important imperial function to his orbit of power.<sup>41</sup>

The civil service became a caste and entered into competition with the army for Imperial power and influence. The army was only seen on occasions but the civil service was always present. These two segments of the Empire were socially and politically isolated from the population at large. The introduction of the military element into the pervasive and heavy handed civil service served to increase the isolation of the army.

Another contributory factor to the isolation was the caste system which became particularly strong in the late Empire. The effect of the legalized caste system was to hold in bondage to a profession people carrying out certain functions. Bakers' sons became bakers. A baker who married out of his caste entered the caste of his wife. Children of married soldiers belonged to the army and were entered upon unit rolls.<sup>42</sup>

Alone and of itself the caste system politically, socially and even culturally isolated the army. This original isolation was made more acute by the legal exclusion of the senatorial and slave classes and certain lowly professions from the military. By these exclusions the military was limited to freedmen and certain base elements of society and to barbarians. The very manner in which recruits for the military were obtained, by levy, in the same manner as horses and pigs, can only have accentuated the social isolation.<sup>43</sup>

A descriptive image of the Roman Empire worthy of consideration is that the forms and practices of the Republic moved from Rome to the limits of the Empire with the passage of time. In the early Empire,



the process of urbanization was dynamic. City constitutions and charters were granted. Citizenship was extended to the provinces. The inhabitants of the outlying areas thus acquired a self-interest in the Empire. Barbarians acquired an interest in the Empire by enlisting in the Legions or in the auxiliaries, where service was the price of citizenship. Even with the extension of Republican forms, the inducements to service were insufficient to fill the ranks. From time to time tribes or the inhabitants of entire areas were assimilated in toto into the Empire.<sup>44</sup>

A device which extended freedoms of the Republic while uniting the interests of the border tribes with the defensive requirements of the Empire were the various treaty and commercial arrangements. The coloni were simply share croppers. They existed throughout the Empire but the system was used to populate border areas. A more sophisticated development was the use of corporati around border forts. The corporati were hereditary agricultural corporations which populated border areas, provided soldiers and provisions. The Laeti were grants of border land to tribes or elements thereof with the obligation of defense and providing recruits. The most sophisticated arrangement was called foederati. The federates were usually Goths and the treaty carried with it the usual obligations of defense and recruits but did not subject the tribes to Roman law.<sup>45</sup>

The final result in terms of isolation of the evolution of the Roman army was a separation, culturally, socially and geographically, from the center of the Empire. This isolation was far greater than that of Greek mercenary troops from their sponsors and at least equal to the isolation of Carthaginian mercenaries from their masters. This

isolation was not political. The Roman legions were fully aware of their key political role and the praetorian tradition.

A fundamental consideration in analyzing the Roman military phenomenon is that all was done in the name of and for the Empire. The soldiers and their officers, whatever their origins, were Romans, with certain rights, privileges, obligations and interests. This never ceased being so from the foundation of the Republic to the dissolution of the Empire.

The absence of political isolation is the key to this judgment. If the Emperor would have acted with complete autonomy, the army would have marched to correct matters but not in its own name. The army would have marched in the name of the Empire because it was Roman.

The political role of the army did not result in autonomy passing to it. There were factions, civil wars and revolts but no danger ever arose from the army that threatened a complete destruction and remaking of the Empire and its self-interest. To have done so would have violated a fundamental trust of Roman citizenship and made way for revolution.

What of the payments of Tiberius to quell the mutinies or the res privata and its fundamental role in maintaining the allegiance of the armies to the Emperor? Do these not bespeak the monetary component of the mercenary phenomenon? The rights, privileges and obligations of Roman citizenship granted liberally to practically all who come in contact with the Empire did not change the human nature of the barbarians. Citizenship did however make it impossible to buy an armed force and still exclude it from the society or any role in the government it fought for. The suborning of soldiers and their generals did frequently

and occasionally massively take place in the Empire. These incidents must be characterized as factional struggles among groups with fundamentally identical loyalties and interests. There appears to be no incidence of war entrepreneurs such as those who raised mercenary armies for the Greeks or for the Carthaginians. In 552 AD Narsus, a Roman general of Armenian origin, defeated a Gothic army and killed its leader Totila, at Tadino in central Italy with a composite mercenary force of Persians, Lombards, Huns and Heruls, raised by war-entrepreneurs. But this occurred after the collapse of the western Empire in 476 AD and the rise of Byzantium.<sup>46</sup>

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## CHAPTER III

### THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

For the purpose of delineating the mercenary phenomenon, the medieval period extends from the battle of Adrianople in 378 AD wherein the Roman legions suffered a decisive defeat, to the beginning of the 14th century when Roger de Flor, the first condottieri appeared. During the first 600 years of this period mercenaries do not appear as a major factor in medieval warfare. From approximately 1050 mercenaries made up an increasingly important segment of order of battle. The special significance of the medieval period for the mercenary phenomenon is the quickening evolutionary influence the unique institution of feudalism had upon it.<sup>1</sup>

The feudal method of government measured power in terms of land and the allegiance of men. With the breakup of the Roman empire and the barbarian invasions the currency basis of wealth declined. The princes of western Europe, whom later Roman emperors had given prominence to through the system of foederati, disseminated and perpetuated the landed economy among the tribes of Germany and Gaul. In this manner a military institution designed to replace the legions planted the seeds of feudalism in the land to the north. The characteristics of this system were an oath of personal allegiance by the prince to the emperor in exchange for mutual military support and honorific titles. The reiteration of the oath of allegiance to the prince and promises of military support to lesser dignitaries in the prince's realm carried the feudal system to the lowest elements of society.<sup>2</sup>

This process of dissemination, called subinfeudation, eventually covered, with the exception of Britain, almost all of western Europe, from Poland to northern Spain and extended through social layers to tenants and knights with relatively small holdings. In addition to knights, the clergy also held land and continued the process of subinfeudation on the Church's lands. At the bottom of this social structure were the villeins and serfs who may or may not have owned land but had little political or social status or power. They lived to a large degree at the whim of the lord and of agricultural conditions.<sup>3</sup>

Allegiance and military service in exchange for land is theoretically pyramidal. The king should have been able to call out a given number of knights when he saw the need for them. The closest to the ideal the feudal system reached was probably under Charlemagne between 800 and 814. After him, the knight-vassals were able to increase their local military power until western Europe, particularly the area covered by present day France and Germany, was dotted with numerous feudal power centers, each contending for more land and the loyalty of vassals but none powerful enough to centralize and lead the whole.<sup>4</sup>

In Britain the feudal system developed independently and later, with a different terminology but much the same characteristics as on the continent. Landholders or thegns, came under a feudal system with the king at the top. At the bottom were the serfs. The king could theoretically call out an array of knights to meet his needs. William the Conqueror continued this system after the battle of Hastings in 1066 by exacting quotas based on landholdings from knights.<sup>5</sup>



The British military historian Sir Charles Oman says:

"That discipline or tactical skill may be as important to an army as were courage he (the medieval knight) had no conception. Assembled with difficulty, insubordinate, unable to maneuver, ready to melt away from its standard the moment its short period of service was over, a feudal force presented an assemblage of unsoldierlike qualities such as seldom have been known to exist. . . . the institution was utterly unadapted to take the offensive."<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, the feudal knights were little interested in or adapted to seigecraft, mining, building fortifications or archery. Herein lies the origin of mercenarism in Europe. When a king or noble wished to expand his domain or carry out legitimate defensive responsibilities, he could not rely on many of his knights to endure the whole campaign with him. Therefore, the kings had to resort to various devices for raising money and hiring mercenaries. This practice appears about the time of the Norman Conquest and was in full use by the 12th century.<sup>7</sup>

The appearance of mercenaries alongside the feudal array coincided in place and time with the development of efficient tax collection and the accumulation of money, as opposed to land capital. The systematized and efficient collection of revenues was present in Normandy under William the Conqueror's predecessors. The Norman precedence in these matters was well advanced over the neighboring duchies of the continent. Following the conquest of England in 1066, the Norman financial system was introduced to England by William. Subsequent English kings continued the Norman system of taxation and were able to finance several mercenary expeditions in this manner.<sup>8</sup>

The practice of scutage developed in England early in the 12th century. The English kings, finding their feudal array suitable for short expeditions but not for long campaigns, began to accept a payment per knight quota instead of personal appearance at the mustering place. The amount of the scutage was the cost of hiring a similarly outfitted

replacement. The practice of accepting scutage continued and spread into parts of the continent for over two hundred years.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps the first substantial western European force containing mercenaries was William the Conqueror's approximately 11,000 mounted and foot troops which faced Harold at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. The precise numbers and proportions of different categories of troops are unknown. Oman says:

"Duke William had undertaken his expedition not as the more feudal head of the barons of Normandy but rather as the managing director of a great joint stock company for the conquest of England, in which not only his own subjects but hundreds of adventurers, poor and rich from all parts of Western Europe had taken shares."

He adds that they came: ". . . some for land and some for pence." and included nobles in search of more wealth and Bretons, Flemings, Angevins, and some from Aquitaine and Lorraine and possibly Normans from the conquered lands of Sicily and Naples. Because of the presence of mercenaries in his army, William takes on certain characteristics of later condottieri.<sup>10</sup>

Direct evidence of William's use of mercenaries are entries in the Domesday Book of 1086 showing numerous Flemish lords in possession of estates in England. In 1094, William caused the English militia to muster in force at Hastings with the instructions that each was to bring ten shillings. The money was collected and used to hire mercenaries from the continent. When William died in 1100 his mercenaries mourned his passing because of his unfailing generosity. His subjects were elated to be rid of a king who had taxed them to their limits.<sup>11</sup>

Later feudal armies were a motley collection of knights and serfs fulfilling their obligation of vassalage or in the pay of the leader for

extending their military service beyond its agreed feudal limit, recruited militia of subjects and impecunious lords totally in the pay of the leader. Often these forces included personal troops of the leader, itinerant foreigners and professional fighters or mercenaries who were often specialized troops such as archers or miners. Such a multitude was necessary in order to have continuity of operations past the normal 40 days for knights and 90 days for footsoldiers. The continual dynastic and expansionistic wars of William's successors weakened the feudal tradition and strengthened the mercenary impulse.<sup>12</sup>

In his dynastic struggles between 1120 and 1154 against the pretender to the English throne, Matilda, King Stephen increased the occasional practice of hiring mercenaries to a regular part of his military operations. Stephen's finances were in good order and he therefore did not find it necessary to rely on the loyalty of the nobles. His mercenary forces were commanded by William of Ypres, a dispossessed Flemish noble. The soldiers were not William's property but were hired by Stephen. Stephen's mercenary contingents contained archers, miners and slingers. The expansionist wars against the Welsh and Scottish kings were notably unsuccessful until mercenary troops were introduced into the campaigns.<sup>13</sup>

In England the scutage had become an increasingly used device since 1100. Commutation of personal service developed into a regular practice for the assembling of an army. On the continent, the French kings availed themselves of the Church in order to impose more taxes, called a tenth. The proceeds from the tenth were frequently used to hire mercenaries. In addition there existed in France a system of commuting personal service similar to scutage. By the beginning of the 12th century

war in 1328, there existed in western Europe sufficient number of men willing to serve a master for money and sufficient currency was available through taxation that financing long and distant campaigns was possible.<sup>14</sup>

The conglomerate nature of a late medieval army reflects the social, cultural and political layering that chivalric traditions imposed on an army. This image is brought into focus by comparison with a professional army, organized into discrete functional units, with a chain of command. The categories in such a conglomerate that had some say in their fate were the landed aristocracy, their vassals and the peasants recruited and paid for the duration of the venture. The remainder of these armies lived outside society and appear to be individuals who did not acknowledge the authority of the society and outlaws. Thus, there was a lack of military command and organization in the feudal array.<sup>15</sup>

The isolated ones were not part of the feudal social, cultural and legal structures. Feudalism placed no obligations on them and they in turn had little incentive to respect its institutions. This isolation is characteristic of medieval mercenaries. There were other categories of troops who were paid for their services and who still served out of personal or feudal obligations or who owed time to the lord but were paid for extending their duties. Many of these isolated ones walked or rode the roads of continental western Europe in small bands or as individuals seeking hire as mercenaries. They were commonly referred to as routiers. This category was a constant menace during the 12th and 13th centuries because they formed under leaders to pillage and loot. The worst of these were called ecorcheurs or skimmers for their habit of taking everything in sight.<sup>16</sup>

The degree of isolation of the mercenaries is demonstrated by the Church's attitude toward them. The first crusade of 1095 was preached

partly as a measure to rid Europe of its footloose and bellicose mercenary elements. In the Church's Lateran Councils of the 12th & 13th centuries mercenaries in general and especially archers and cross-bowmen were excommunicated and Christian rulers were prohibited from using them. The terms of the treaty of Winchester in 1149 whereby Stephen retained his crown further illustrate the isolation of the mercenaries. All mercenaries were to be expelled from England by the terms of this treaty.<sup>17</sup>

The very fact of land based feudal military obligations and vassalage led to the evolution of mercenaries as an institution. The lack of discipline and corporate military ineffectiveness of the feudal array in an age of dynastic and expansionistic struggles required autonomy of leadership. This need for autonomy led directly to the rise of the mercenary phenomenon in the late middle ages. By hiring the dispossessed, landless and restless itinerants, ambitious leaders assembled the closest equivalent of a standing army possible for the times. The threat of praetorianism from mercenaries appears not to have existed in most parts of feudal Europe. With a few exceptions, mercenary leaders of renown possessing dynastic pretensions did not emerge. Stephen granted an estate to his mercenary captain, William of Ypres, a dispossessed Flemish noble. When the nobles of England forced King John to sign the magna carta in 1215, one of their conditions was that he rid the country of his mercenary captains, a number of whom are named in that document. Other mercenaries who did fight for the English were acquired as a group, probably under their own captains from fiefrentiers, usually rich Flemish nobles who hired out their own subjects. Naturally the specialized mercenary archers, cross-bowmen and slingers were unable by themselves to aspire to the overthrow of a feudal unit.<sup>18</sup>

The reasons for the absence of dynastic pretensions and therefore for the trust and loyalty that seems to have existed between kings and their mercenaries are twofold. Mercenaries, whether mounted or foot, were usually individuals or small groups. Infrequently, mercenaries were hired as organized contingents or as specialists. The second reason is that the feudal traditions of chivalry based on land were still too strong. In the late fourteenth century, a mercenary army would have had to effect a social and political revolution in addition to a military takeover in order to keep power.

The monetary component of the medieval mercenary phenomenon elucidates the mercenary concept in an important way. Mercenaries must be paid in cash. If they were paid in land or already possessed it, they entered the feudal structure with all that implies in terms of independence, loss of autonomy and military inefficiency. Concurrent with the evolution of efficient financial management under William the Conqueror and his Norman predecessors and under the English kings of the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries we find an increase in the use of mercenaries.<sup>14</sup>

Professional armies were not the order of the day during medieval times in western Europe. King Cnut's Huscarles have been discussed in this regard as one of the few standing, professional armies of the period. For the rest, the feudal array can in one sense be termed professional. Their closest point of contact with the concept of professionalism is at the individual level where knights were personally competent in the use of arms but had no sense of conducting operations as part of a large military organization with objectives common to the entire army. The corporate professional qualities of the long and cross-bowmen were somewhat greater. We rarely find evidence in the medieval scene the great captains

who held together a large army of diverse arms, disciplined and uniformly equipped, capable of functioning as a coordinated force in battle.

The feudal ideology had little room for mercenarism. A precisely structured social order in which every person had a role and based on land holdings was the core of feudalism. This social order was sanctioned by the Church and there were few forces which modified this system in any but an ephemeral way. The Church's excommunication of archers and cross-bowmen and injunction against their use contrasts with the later dependence of monarchs upon them. The relation between monarch and his mercenaries in some cases was personal and marked by bonds of affection. It is improbable that any such bond could have existed without payments on a regular basis.

The outcast character of mercenary isolation of the medieval period shows the emptiness of their ideology. Wanderers, routiers and ecorcheurs who looted and robbed between wars had few roots or prospects of improving their lot in the social order. The only ideology which seems to have come naturally to them was a loyalty, sometimes tempered with respect and affection for their leader. The ideological dividing line between mercenary and serf can be seen in the pressure military service placed on the people of the feudal system. At the bottom, landed serfs, too poor to buy arms and armor, were allowed to bond together and send one of their number, on a rotating basis to fulfill military service obligation. Occasionally the one who went away to fight remained away to become a mercenary.<sup>20</sup>

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## CHAPTER IV

### THE MERCENARY PHENOMENON DURING THE RENAISSANCE

The Italian Renaissance contained in a single historical period three types of mercenary institutions: individuals, war-entrepreneurs and condottieri. The Italian Renaissance is famous for the extensive and pervasive nature of these institutions. Individual mercenaries and war-entrepreneurs were frequent phenomena in ancient and medieval times. The condottieri, professional mercenary captains who recruited, trained, disciplined and led mercenary armies in the service of states or princes to whom they had only monetary ties, are a distinguishing feature of the Renaissance.

The condotta, from which the term comes, is a formal contract drawn up and signed by the hiring government and the fighting captain. Condottas could take an infinite variety of forms and specify endless details. Condottas specified defense or offense, the length of the campaign, what was to be done in winter, the means of payment, resupply, types and numbers of weapons, horses, artillery, methods and frequency of inspections, in sum all the details of an operation. Some condottas were more than operation plans in that they stipulated renewals for a given number of years, gave the condottieri a voice in councils, set up an estate for the condottieri and pensions for his men or indicated how long his wife and children were to be held hostage, who gave legitimate orders, the division of spoils, what enemies were to be attacked and which excluded. City-states might impose a condotta on weaker

neighbors as a means of securing an alliance or of depriving a rival of military potential.<sup>1</sup>

The institutional origins of the condottieri grew out of the 100 years war and the decline of feudalism. Feudalism declined in Italy more rapidly than in the rest of Europe. Geographic isolation, the quickening of arts and letters, the struggles between the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope and the Byzantine military threat were factors.

In the early 13th century the Holy Roman Emperor systematically set about rationalizing the government and laws of his kingdom of Naples and Sicily. The result was a form of totalitarian government where the people were subject to the administration of the Emperor and not to a feudal lord. The rationalizing tendency appeared in northern Italy in the form of a ruthless and tyrannical usurper. Both of these personalities gave impulse to the decline of feudalism, the one by his government, the other by his atrocities, which hastened the rise of the city-states and duchies of Italy.<sup>2</sup>

The idea of nobility and kingship, key elements of the feudal system, were opened to question by these events and conditions. The Renaissance idea of nobility was based on ability and not birth as it was under feudalism. The condottieri were constantly endeavoring to make their tyrannies legitimate by seeking titles and investiture from the Pope or the Holy Roman Emperor or by acquiring learning and culture. The social status based on land and birth, characteristics of feudalism, were much weaker in Renaissance Italy than in the feudal north. We find the most efficient choice of means to ends, without further considerations in the Renaissance political structure.<sup>3</sup>

Mercenarism in Italy got its real start from the release of large numbers of English, French, Brabant, Flemish and German fighting men

from the essentially mercenary armies of the 100 years war. These fighting men, both foot and mounted, grouped under natural leaders and known as routiers, lived off the French countryside and searched for employment in wars. Among other means of ridding the country of them, the French kings and the Popes, who then lived in Avignon, spread the rumor that many wars were to be fought and much plunder to be had beyond the Alps. A number of these bands crossed the Alps and entered Italy.<sup>4</sup>

The Renaissance began with a penetration of the insularity of the Italian peninsula and ended some 200 years later in the same manner. From beyond the Alps came the forerunners of the condottieri, Roger de Flor, Werner de Urslingen and Walter of Montreal who led successive armies known as the Great Company between 1302 and 1352. Their activities varied from relatively innocent living off the land to plunder and destruction. The period ends with the French invasions between 1494 and 1527.<sup>5</sup>

The more famous of these bands were called the White Company and the Latecomers. Of the early mercenary leaders, Sir John Hawkwood came to Italy after the battle of Poitiers and with the signing of the treaty of Bretigny in 1360. Hawkwood is a prototypical condottieri. He was the perfect professional, never aspiring to any but military honors and thoroughly competent. He was in the hire during his career of about 35 years, of Florence, Pisa, Milan and Perugia. A clause of his condotta specified that he would never be required to do battle against the King of England. He was so trusted by the Florentines that he once was used by them to put down internal disorders in the city. He adhered with great fidelity to the conditions of his condotta and is perhaps most famous for his faithfulness in a faithless age. He was an original and innovative tactician and won battles by quick movement and reliance on infantry and

archers against opponents whose tactical concepts had frozen into stereotyped forms. The Florentines erected a statue of him and provided a large pension for his family upon his death in 1394.<sup>6</sup>

The condottieri of the 14th century were mostly foreign born and probably for this reason did not have dynastic ambitions. The Italian condottieri of the 15th and early 16th century gave the term its full meaning. Alberigo da Barbiano was the heir to Hawkwood. He outlived him by 15 years and served Milan, Naples, and the King of Hungary. He was Italian and hired only Italians. The founding of the Italian school of the art of war is credited to him. Barbiano, in those he trained, set the tone of wars in Italy through the tactics he used and the spirit he infused into it. Hawkwood was a product of the battles of Crecy and Poitiers where the cavalry annihilated itself against infantry pikemen in strong defensive positions and supported by numerous long-bowmen. Whereas the tactics developed by Barbiano diminished significantly the role of infantry and archers and depended almost entirely on cavalry and its mobility.

The spirit of the Italian school of war was at variance with Hawkwood. Crecy and Poitiers were savage dynastic battles with large numbers of casualties. The Italian wars of the 15th century consisted of battles in which the art of maneuver and bluff were highly developed. The Italian condottieri rarely fought at night and regularly went into winter quarters. The object of the art of war became to avoid battle except under ideally favorable conditions. When battle was joined, casualties were almost uniformly very small and the number of hostages very high. The art of the condottieri, as opposed to the art of war, was to prolong wars and campaigns, drawing the maximum gold from his

employer, without risking his capital in being. There were battles without casualties and cases of collusion between opposing condottieri.<sup>7</sup>

Barckhardt, a Swiss historian of the Renaissance mentions the major and minor states of the 14th and 15th centuries. Milan, Florence, Venice Rome under the Popes and the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily were the major states. Florence and Venice were republics. The minor states that he discusses are six in number but there were at least two dozen more tyrannies, duchies and republics. These political units supported approximately 25 condottieri of established reputation between the years 1350 and 1525 and at least 200 more of minor or local reputation. With these numbers in mind and realizing that condottieri changed allegiances several times in their professional lifetimes, combining and recombining their forces with the greater condottieri, we are able to imagine the infinite complexity of the period.<sup>8</sup>

There are remarkable similarities between the Italian city-states of the Renaissance and the Greek city-states at the height of their glory. In addition to artistic and literary glory and expansion of trade and commerce, both periods experienced an intense political life, with all the attributes of sovereignty in their city-states. This intensity was primarily due to the fact that wars, alliances, trade and taxes touched directly upon almost every person in these units of government who had a direct knowledge and sometimes a voice in the policies of the government. Another point of comparison is the evolution over about 300 years of Greek and Italian city-states from republics to duchies and tyrannies of various sorts with practically identical political factions of Gualph or democratic and Ghibelline or aristocratic parties contending for power.<sup>9</sup>

Into this microcosm of intensely competing sovereignties stepped the condottieri. Tyrannies and duchies needed mercenaries as protection against their own citizens and neighboring states. The republics needed condottieri for expansion and protection of trade but primarily because by the 15th century, the citizens preferred taxes and the hiring of mercenaries to their participation in a citizen militia.<sup>10</sup>

The modern mercenary phenomenon in western Europe had its origins in the unreliability and indiscipline of the feudal array, qualities which they seemed well suited to correct. The mercenaries of the 100 years war were not however an unmixed blessing as the people of France later experienced in the routiers and ecorcheurs. Hawkwood was perhaps too ideal in his ability and integrity. The mercenary system proved it too had drawbacks.

Two of the most acute eye-witness observers of the Renaissance are not champions of the condottieri system. Guicciardini, an Italian historian and observer of the late Renaissance, fully recognized their limitations. He is critical of the Swiss mercenaries and attributes the Italian defeat at Fornovo by Charles VIII in 1494 to mercenaries who turned to plunder. Most critical and perhaps most deeply reflective of the consequences of the mercenary system's effects on Italy was Machiavelli: In his three major works, he is unrelenting and vigorous in his attacks on the system, leading to his view of the ultimate military supremacy of citizen soldiers led by a citizen general. He reminds the leaders of Florence: "It is indeed the truest of truths that if, where there are men there are no soldiers, it is their rulers

fault and not the fault of the situation or of nature . . . for gold does not find good soldiers but good soldiers are quite capable of finding gold." Machiavelli was some 300 years ahead of his time in this reference to the qualities of citizen soldiers. It is possible that his condemnation of the condottieri and urgings to a citizen army was shared by his thoughtful contemporaries. Unfortunately it remained to the relatively modern professional French army to prove the military shortcomings of the system in 1494.<sup>11</sup>

Machiavelli's point was vitiated by the defeat of Bolognese, in one case, and Florentine militia in another by experienced and well led mercenary armies. At the battle of Costagnaro in 1387, Hawkwood won one of his greatest victories over a large mixed army of condottieri and hastily raised levies. In 1529, two years after Machiavelli's death, an allied French and papal army invested and sacked Florence overrunning the hastily collected militia and small mercenary army.<sup>12</sup>

Many condottieri aspired to legitimate rule of these political units. Legitimacy as it was understood in early modern Europe meant legitimacy by birth according to known laws. Legitimacy of this type had long disappeared from the Italian scene. The 12th century governments of the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick II and Ezzalino da Romano, the Italian despot, were the starting points of an evolution over two centuries to the organization of government based on the personality of the ruler. Legitimacy of birth mattered not. The feudal type of illegitimacy could be overcome in Italy by imperial titles, papal investiture and popular support providing the ruler had the cunning, freedom from scruples, absence of traditional ideals and courage to place himself at the seat of power.<sup>13</sup>



Hawkwood received a small estate of which he was the legitimate lord by papal investiture. In 1402, a number of cities and considerable wealth reverted to the Visconti of Milan upon the death of Facino Cane, their principal and most trusted condottieri. In 1431, Carmagnola, an honored condottieri of Venice was lured there and executed for treason on the suspicion that he sought a duchy. Giacomo Piccinino, a renowned condottieri of the mid 15th century commanded enough patronage to aspire to the lordship of Siena at the head of a large mercenary army. Certain Italian states turned against him and he was murdered.<sup>14</sup>

One of the most famous and successful of the dynastic condottieri was Francesco Sforza. He was the son of a famous condottieri of rustic origin but was a highly cultivated man of exceptional military and political ability. His aspirations to the duchy of Milan were long-standing and he carefully laid the groundwork, using connections developed through various condotta with Florence and Milan and his marriage to the daughter of the last Duke of Milan, Filippo Visconti. When Filippo died in 1447, Francesco made himself Duke of Milan and established the Sforza dynasty. His final step was as much the result of years of patient groundwork as it was of political favor by Florence, Venice, the Papacy and Naples and an invitation by the pro-Sforza party within the city.<sup>15</sup>

### The Swiss

Swiss mercenarism is an integral though distinct part of Renaissance history. Early in the 14th century the Swiss established the supremacy of their men and tactics over the infantry and cavalry of the Austrians, Germans and French. In the course of the centuries between the first of these battles and the battle of Marignano in 1515 the Swiss infantry was unbeaten and decisive. The provision of

mercenary troops became the national industry of an ever increasing number of federated cantons in the mountainous area separating Germany, Austria, Italy and France.<sup>16</sup>

The cantonal federation was at once the strength and the weakness of the Swiss system of war-entrepreneurs. From three original cantons of the early 13th century, the federation grew to 13 by 1500 through the acceptance of neighboring areas seeking independence from feudal overlordship or by conquest. As the federation grew, the control of the confederation remained sufficiently strong to prevent civil wars and the various cantons from hiring out their soldiery independently. With its consolidation however, the confederation was subjected to corrupting influences from the competing nations on its borders. The result was a weakening of the federation and de facto civil war between cantonal levies fighting in the pay of foreign masters. Swiss war-entrepreneurship was a successful capitalistic venture even under these deteriorating circumstances. It failed in this respect after the battles of Marignano (1515) and Bicocca (1522) where the Swiss pikemen were beaten by French artillery and their own stubbornness and lack of discipline.<sup>17</sup>

Swiss troops were raised by levies and fought under their own captains. The confederation, which was theoretically the central point for negotiations, payment and dispatching of troops, had a keen political sense. Throughout this period Swiss captains acquired little fame as commanders. Swiss captains possessed adequate tactical ability but were deficient in political or innovative powers. The Swiss did not become condottieri and appeared not to aspire to conquest. They fought in the service of others and then for commercial reasons. In

1512, Swiss mercenaries in papal service drove the French from northern Italy. The French reentered Italy in 1515 and captured Milan from the Sforza's who had hired Swiss mercenaries for the defense. Thereafter, the Swiss ceased to have a corporate influence in Italy. They hired themselves out as individuals or units directly to the Pope or King of France. In 1516 the confederation entered into a perpetual treaty with France, maintaining a mercenary force of 16,000 for defensive purposes only with the condition that confederate forces never be used against the French.<sup>18</sup>

The early condottieri were of English, French, Flemish German or Spanish origin and their troops were primarily northern European, French and English. The ways of the early condottieri were often more akin to banditry than to the sophisticated arrangements of the later ones. They were, therefore, isolated from their hirers to a considerable degree. With the exception of John Hawkwood, the early condottieri possessed political influence largely through force. As feudal customs recede the humanism of the Renaissance gained momentum, the condottieri drew culturally and socially very close to the society in which they operated. John Hawkwood was held in sufficient trust to be charged with putting down internal troubles in Florence. Other condottieri contributed to the political life of the city-states. The efforts of numerous condottieri to legitimize their rule by fostering the arts and building monuments shows the practical absence of isolation in the later Renaissance.

As a result of the integration of the mercenaries into Italian society and culture, autonomy was minimum. The art of these condottieri consisted in drawing the maximum pay from the city-state by adhering

to the letter and not the spirit of the condotta. The prolongation of wars, battles with no casualties, the eagerness to capture hostages and the winter quartering, coupled with a certain mercenary fraternity of men who had followed the same profession over many years in the service of many masters, leaves the strong impression of accommodation. The typical condottieri was loath to risk his property, i.e., his soldiers. Rather than fight, they practiced and perfected the art of war. It is possible that the city-states may have acquiesced in these accommodations for the sake of preserving the balance of power. However, it is more probable that the city governments never developed the conditions that would motivate their mercenary armies to all out battle. Autonomy was more in the hands of the condottieri than the employer.

The monetary component appears to be the determining component in the Renaissance. Money made the system operate. There was little isolation and less autonomy. The condottieri's men were his capital-in-being. He needed money to keep them together and he need not always fight to preserve his army.

The monetary component distinguishes the condottieri from true professionals. The margin of error by the hirer was very small in regard to payments. Slippage in the schedule of payments was not acceptable. While a professional army might become demoralized by a lack of pay, they would not be prone to change masters. Condottieri did change masters on regular basis for precisely this reason. With this one exception, the condottieri possessed the other attributes of professionals. Their reputation was built on their prowess on the battlefield and their ability to win. Battles without losses notwithstanding, maneuver, tactics and leadership were the condottieri's staff of life.

The condottieri were not the faceless ones of previous epochs. They impressed their personalities mightily on the Italy of the Renaissance. If they were held in low repute or detested, it was for some personal quality and not because they were condottieri. There is a subjective element to the mercenary phenomenon of the Renaissance. Usurpers practiced the arts and built monuments to overcome the illegitimacy of their rule. This mercenary ideology represents the urge to improve their lot and become stable, respectable members of their society.

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## CHAPTER V

### THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

The early modern period begins in 1494 with the French King, Charles the Eighth's invasion of Italy and ends with the French Revolution. It is a profoundly transitional period. From its beginning the mercenary phenomenon flourished and spread in its many forms from Italy throughout Europe, finding its fullest expression in the Thirty Years War from 1618 until 1648. Thereafter, the mercenary content of armies declined gradually, yielding to the mixed conscript armies and finally dissolving into the great national conscript armies of the French Revolution and after.

The vertical dimension of the mercenary phenomenon, condottieri reached its zenith in the Thirty Years War and, thereafter, disappeared from the historical scene.

The causes of this transition were numerous. Monarchic and bureaucratic absolutism, a growing sense of nationalism and its obligations, the spread of revolutionary philosophies, the increase of trade and the rise of the middle classes were the major causes. Most important of the influences on mercenarism were the rationalization of governmental administration, the increasing tempo of warfare, the growth in size and complexity of armies and the increasing use of conscripts.

From the unrestrained manifestations of mercenarism in Italy around 1500, the period saw its disappearance as a militarily significant



phenomenon three hundred years later. The condottieri, that unique blend of proprietor, businessman, strategist, tactician, diplomatist, financier, recruiter, armorer, trainer and disciplinarian were the first to succumb to the centralizing and specializing tendencies of the age. The masses of mercenaries were next to succumb, to the revolutionary and nationalizing forces.

After 1650 the condottieri's functions were increasingly performed by numerous individuals separately responsible to kings or parliaments or both. Individual mercenaries abounded as always but the condottieri and war entrepreneur were no longer there to make the enterprise profitable. The individual mercenary therefore began to lose his distinctive characteristics and was absorbed into the increasingly prevalent conscript and volunteer armies of the late 17th and 18th centuries. Many of the mercenary type increasingly found their way overseas to the growing colonies of the western European nations.<sup>1</sup>

The exception to this trend was England, who three times in the 18th century hired Danes, Hessians and Hanoverians to supplement her conscripted troops in continental balance of power wars. In 1708 Parliament authorized an army of 40,000, 22,000 of which were subsidized, or mercenary troops hired by treaty for the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714). Again in 1742 for the War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748) 16,000 Danes and Hessians were hired. For the Seven Years War (1756-1763) in 1762, the total of subsidized foreign troops was raised to 65,000. Wars in the British Isles were fought almost exclusively with Irish, Welsh, Scottish or English levies.<sup>2</sup>

Mercenary strength on the continent rarely exceeded one-third of the British order of battle for any engagement. In absolute numbers their strength was usually between five and ten thousand. The general trend over the three hundred years from 1500 to 1800 was a gradual increase in the size of armies and decrease in definitely identifiable mercenaries and a practical disappearance of condottieri after about 1650.<sup>3</sup>

#### French Wars of Religion (1562-1580)

Both sides in the French Wars of Religion unabashedly and repeatedly used mercenaries under royalist or Huguenot officers. Although no evidence of the hiring of condottieri in France during this period was found, large numbers of other mercenaries were employed. This is not surprising on the royal and catholic side. To have done otherwise would have been a drastic departure from tradition. The Queen of France, Catherine de Medici, availed herself of the Perpetual Treaty of 1520 with the Swiss Confederation. The terms of this treaty bound the confederation to maintain 16,000 Swiss for French use and required them to provide troops to no other kingdom. In addition to the Swiss, the royalists used large numbers of German reiters or cavalry and landesknecchts, or infantry whose conditions of hire did not preclude service under another banner.<sup>4</sup>

The Huguenots were scattered in Calvinist centers throughout France and did not have the governmental machinery of the royalists to tax, raise armies and equip the faithful. They often found themselves under seige and were seldom able to go on the offensive. They must be given credit for occasional attempts to harmonize the lives of their

soldiers with the ideals of the religion for which they fought and eliminate the habitual soldierly vices of swearing, gambling, and whoring. Their predicament left them no choice but to tax their faithful and hire mercenaries, mostly reiters and landesknecchts from Germany.<sup>5</sup>

#### The Thirty Years War (1618-1648)

The Thirty Years War is the watershed of this transitional period. The excesses of the mercenary armies, the unrestrained recruiting, the geographic concentration of numerous and vigorously contending armies and their commission of enormities in Germany over a thirty year span left central Europe a depopulated wasteland. A definite cause and effect relationship between the frequency and intensity of mercenary warfare in a relatively circumscribed area from 1618 to 1648 and the later period of moderation is difficult to demonstrate. Nevertheless, with the peace of Westphalia in 1648 came a change in the nature of warfare and the composition of the armies. Conscription became the rule and wars became stylized and gentlemanly affairs.

One could interpret that the individual spirit and personal conviction was very much in the background and that dynastic ambitions or pride governed in the name of religious persuasion. The only soldiery pure in spirit in western Europe appears to have been in the New Model Army of Cromwell and the Swedish Army of Gustavus Adolphus. Although not their commanding general, Cromwell was able to inspire a religious fanaticism and general sobriety that sharply distinguishes his volunteer and recruited army from the mercenary hordes of continental Europe.<sup>6</sup>

The Thirty Years War presents a totally different picture. The Holy Roman Empire was divided into a number of duchies and lesser realms. It was thoroughly disunited politically and the Emperor did not have the power to create unity. The natural ambitions of the princes of this traditional empire were exacerbated by the religious divisions of the Reformation, embodied in the Protestant Union, to which England and the United Provinces belonged and the Catholic League, supported by Spain and France.<sup>7</sup>

The religious nature of the struggle did not uniformly tend to the armies. An endless array of condottieri of the most varied nationalities served both sides, vying constantly for the services of a seemingly inexhaustible pool of the most diverse mercenary manpower. Some fifteen condottieri of reputation are associated with the parties of the Thirty Years War. These leaders came from at least eight different countries, primarily Italy and Germany. The majority fought in the employ of the Holy Roman Emperor but several changed sides. The troops were even more varied, some coming from Greece, Turkey and Russia, in addition to the western European countries.<sup>8</sup>

Albrecht von Waldstein, or Wallenstein, carried the idea of the condottieri to its greatest extent. From a modest origin as a minor Bohemian noble, he became probably the wealthiest man in the Empire and one of its greatest landowners. After becoming Duke of Friedland, he aspired to become the Elector Palatine and incorporate Bohemia, Brandenburg and Mecklenburg into his lauds. No other condottieri had such a grandiose dynastic impulse. He formed a partnership with Hans de Witte, using his capital to raise an army of 20,000 which he put at

the service of the Emperor. With his army Wallenstein inserted himself into the politics of the Holy Roman Empire and the struggle of the Hapsburgs. He could not be ignored in important matters. Much of his military success can be attributed to his organization of his own vast estates into supply depots and financial bases for his army.

At times Marshal Tilly, a leading condottieri of the Holy Roman Empire, complained to Ferdinand, the Emperor, that Wallenstein's liberal pay had caused his mercenary army to evaporate. Wallenstein's intent was probably to maintain his military and political independence by weakening a potential rival. Wallenstein made himself so indispensable that he demanded and received from the Emperor absolute authority in certain territories, unrestricted command of the Imperial armies and the authority to conclude treaties. Besides success as a military commander, he carried out innovations in his armies, promoting on merit rather than seniority for social position. Perhaps because of the suddenness and magnitude of his successes in business, politics, war and social mobility Wallenstein acquired enemies who combined with the Spanish and Austrian Hapsburgs to bring about his assassination.<sup>9</sup>

Gustavus Adolphus was the only contender in the Thirty Years War who seriously attempted to maintain a religious qualification in his armies. His purpose in this regard was undoubtedly practical, for it welded together the Swedish nucleus in a common purpose and lent substance to the Protestant cause and his alliances. He did not however, carry religious fervor to the extreme of forcing conversions among the many mercenaries he recruited.<sup>10</sup>

Unlike Britain who relied first on continental mercenaries and secondly on conscripted British troops, the Swedes waged overseas wars with a large nucleus of Swedish conscripts and volunteers who were the products of the recruiting and training of district-based regular regiments. These troops were under the complete control of the sovereign and appear to have felt strong personal and corporate loyalties to him. Some 13,000 such troops entered Germany with the King in 1630. The artillery and cavalry and a few regiments of infantry were Swedish. The rest of his army of about 30,000 were locally recruited German and Scottish mercenaries. By 1648 the Swedish content had significantly diminished in relation to the mercenary content.

The significance of Gustavus Adolphus' practices and innovations was twofold. He showed that an army containing a significant proportion of national conscripts and volunteers could defeat a professional mercenary army. Additionally his mixed national-mercenary army became a prototype for the next 130 years.<sup>11</sup>

Ferrero, an early 20th century Italian publicist, observes: "From the death of Louis XIV (1715) to the French Revolution, the European states endeavored to keep war subject to those minutely codified restrictions . . . In short, war was a classic art . . . one of the loftiest achievements of the 18th century. It belongs to the class of hot-house plants which can only thrive in the aristocratic and qualitative civilization . . ." In fact, there is an element of the ancien regime missing from this view. Frederick William, King of Prussia from 1713 to 1740, limited the proportion of Prussians serving in his regiments

to no more than one-half, the rest being mercenaries, on the theory that the remainder of the people were to engage without distractions in commerce and industry. Frederick the Great who ruled from 1740 to 1786, carried this logic further, limiting Prussians to no more than three percent of the total male population. Such was his view of the state that he wished for the population to be unaware that a war was in progress. The English ideal was very similar, differing in the respect that a strong motor-force in the British institution of the press gang was the ridding of the country of the unproductive elements in place of artisans and workers. By the 18th century there was competition between armies and the emerging mercantile classes for manpower.<sup>12</sup>

The simile of the 18th century warfare as a hot-house plant is essentially apt. Sieges were to last only a given period. The besieged could capitulate after a suitable defense. Winter was for politicking and compromise and summer for maneuvers and engagements. War was the sport of kings and the people participated in this regal business by paying taxes and occasionally in person. War was not their business and they preferred to have someone else do the fighting.<sup>13</sup>

#### Britain

In the 18th century the powers of western Europe relied increasingly on volunteers and conscripts and decreasingly on mercenaries. The British exceptions to this observation in her continental ventures have been mentioned. Some appreciation of the British role is seen in

the fact that 37 treaties providing mercenaries from Switzerland, Ireland, Hesse, Cassel, Hanover, Denmark and Saxony to the major powers are recorded between 1677 and 1815. Seventeen of these are with Great Britain.<sup>14</sup>

The history of British use of mercenaries is closely bound to her geography, constitutional history, and the development of her professional army. This history must be understood against the backdrop of the New Model Army, which was professional although not mercenary, that held the balance of political power in Britain in the mid-17th century. James II had an army of 37,000 in 1688 which was a considerable increase over the 9,000 Charles II had in 1685. William of Orange landed in England in 1689 with 13,000 troops but soon hired a mercenary army under the mercenary, Marshal Schonburg, for his wars in Ireland. In 1693 William requested of Parliament authority to raise an army of 84,000. Parliament acquiesced but specified that units were to be commanded by His Majesty's born subjects only and that it could contain no mercenaries. By 1698 Parliament had withdrawn even this support and required the reduction of the army to 7,000 in England and 12,000 in Ireland. No foreign born could serve in this army.<sup>15</sup>

The subsequent history of Great Britain up to the French Revolution consists of mercenaries hired on the continent and the most severe and drastic recruiting methods domestically for the continental and colonial wars. The press gang is a uniquely British device. The continental conscripts were raised for regular army units by systems based on geographic districts which may have been just as brutal as the press



gang in their effects on the individual. The press gang, however, was quite random in its selection of candidates and literally assembled the scum of the earth for the foreign wars. The best that can be said for these victims is that they were not mercenaries. Another peculiarly British institution for manning the armies was the enlisting of criminals of all kinds. The emptying of the prisons occurred in response to the three major continental wars Great Britain fought in the 18th century.<sup>16</sup>

In the 18th century, commissions were still subject to patronage and purchase a remnant of the feudal and condottieri tradition. Most commissions went to the landed nobility. In 1688 Marlborough, although not the commander-in-chief, personally controlled appointments and promotions. The selection of nobles for command in England was social and accidental whereas it was deliberate and bureaucratic on the continent.<sup>17</sup>

In 1756 William Pitt passed the Militia Act which provided for an equitable and equal system of national recruitment for internal defense. The militia had existed in the 17th century but in a fragmented and decentralized form. In fact, Britain had a variety of contractual methods for recruiting militia. The number of methods of enlisting or being drafted into the militia seems to be the result of design rather than inefficient administration. Parliament habitually opposed large garrisons or a powerful mobile force and troops were quartered in small garrisons throughout the country. A curious but appropriate British military phenomenon was the designation of several domestic regiments to supplement the manning of ships in war. This priority for the army existed because it drew the standing army off to the first line of defense in war.<sup>18</sup>

The parliamentary tradition of England, her geography and naval supremacy, the persistent fear of standing armies and the universal disinclination for men to go to war in the absence of a clear and present danger caused England to lag behind the continental powers in the formation of her professional army. The first Mutiny Act, by which Parliament recognized the separate nature of military discipline and empowered commanders to quell mutinies and maintain discipline was passed in 1689. It was renewable yearly. Even with the legal power to enforce discipline and the extreme recruiting methods, serious manpower shortages developed during the War of Spanish succession.<sup>19</sup>

The British Army at the beginning of the 18th century was motley and random collection of regiments divided into three establishments in the British Isles and several others overseas, each administered differently and with different rates of pay. The necessary functions of transportation, procurement of supplies, armories, hospitalization and billeting were not provided for centrally and were left to regiments or battalions.

The first regular artillery regiment was organized in 1727 and in 1741 the Royal Artillery Academy was formed. Regular horse artillery did not appear until 1793. The formal establishment of logistical support flowing from administration agencies responsible for the entire army occurred about 1750. By the end of the 18th century a substantial bureaucracy had developed to handle the various functions of running the war machine.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the accumulation of functions by the government formerly performed by generals or condottieri, the English tendency to hire mercenaries persisted right up to the end of the century. It was cheaper in

terms of domestic political cost to buy foreign soldiers and put them under British officers. Some conscriptions was acceptable and even desirable. The organized militia was scattered about the land in small garrisons and much of it could be used to man the ships if war threatened. In any event, the navy was far more important than the army because it protected shipping and was the first line of defense. Thus, Great Britain, an isolated and wealthy trading country like Carthage, fought remote wars with mercenary troops under her officers. Great Britain never made the mistake of bringing mercenary hordes to her shores and touched upon the mercenary phenomenon in modern times only through proprietary commissions and the foreign commands of her officers.<sup>21</sup>

The heart of modern mercenarism was thus continental. The rhythm of invasions, maneuver, battle and quartering of armies had long since engendered standing armies. The problem was to make them more effective and less costly. By the end of the Thirty Years War, Spain was a declining power, France and Germany were beginning to develop the institutional framework necessary for a truly modern professional army. The modern state of Prussia was yet to emerge and the Sweden of Gustavus Adolphus was probably the most modern of all.

### France

The French state of this period is characterized by the attitude of Louis XIV, who ruled from 1643 until 1715; "It is in my person alone that the sovereign power resides . . ." This sovereignty was reflected in a large and oppressive bureaucracy which extended to every corner of France. The central ministries begun under Richelieu had grown and specialized. Under Louis XV there were secretaries for the army and

many in addition to traditional councils dealing with domestic and foreign affairs. These ministries established and maintained arsenals, hospitals, barracks, transports and fortresses.<sup>22</sup>

Credit for reform of the military establishment and the modernization of the army belongs to the Secretaries of War, LeTellier and later to his son, Louvois, who standardized and developed the various functions of the army. They introduced during the 17th century regular drills and training, an inspector general, regulations and tables of organization. These reforms were carried on by the Comte de St. Germain Minister of War in the 18th century.<sup>23</sup>

The professional French army contained numerous foreign regiments which were the property of their commanders and were manned entirely by national troops. Many of these regiments had long and hoary traditions and found no trouble in filling their ranks from their homeland. In a sense, many Swiss, Scottish, Irish and Italians went from the cradle to the grave in French service.<sup>24</sup>

France maintained the largest military establishment of the period. At the end of the 17th century, she had some 440,000 regulars and militia under arms. Her regular army contained 80,000 or more men. The Army is estimated to have contained some 50,000 mercenaries in the mid-18th century. Conscription into the military was by district. In time of war the militia provided troops for the regular army. In the early 18th century, the militia provided 20,000 troops per year.<sup>25</sup>

The efforts of LeTellier, Louvois and St Germain and their ministries did not remove two serious deficiencies in French army organization. Many regimental commanders owned their units, called proprietary units, and the government appears not to have had the money

to purchase them. These commands were in addition to the foreign mercenary regiments and conscripts. Secondly, commissions were created for purchase with the result that the army of 1775 had a strength of 170,000 and an officer strength of 60,000 which absorbed approximately one-half of the army budget. There were significant vestiges of the feudal traditions in an army which disdained the bourgeois in favor of the landed aristocrat.<sup>26</sup>

The Comte de St Germain was very deliberate in his policy of recruiting his officers from the nobility and his soldiers from the unproductive strata of society. Elaborate verification procedures existed to establish social precedence and eligibility. The untitled middle class officers were held to be a weakening influence on the noble martial qualities necessary in war and gained entrance to the army through the technical branches, especially the artillery. The intent of this policy is clear. It had the twofold advantage of occupying restless and potentially disruptive elements of society and of protecting the revenue producing elements.<sup>27</sup>

The political absolutism and bureaucratic complexity of France after the Thirty Years War created an environment in which proprietary units and individual mercenaries were much in demand but where the condottieri could not thrive. His function had been usurped by the centralized, bureaucratic state.

### Prussia

The path followed by the Prussian state to absolutism, acting through a pervasive centralized bureaucracy is notably different from that of France but quite the same in its effects upon the mercenary phenomenon. Prussia was an artificial state created out of the dispersed

Hohenzollern domains of Brandenburg, Cleves, Mark and East Prussia. The state was a result of the strong unifying personalities of Frederick William, the Great Elector, Frederick William I and Frederick II between 1688 and 1786 prevailing over the independence of the nobility in matters of taxation, recruiting and quartering of troops.<sup>28</sup>

The military organization of the state was the governing factor of social, political and economic life. The Hohenzollerns in effect revolutionized the feudal aristocracy by giving them a vested interest in the army, the state and the person of the King. Frederick William (1640-1688) formed a cadet corps of the sons of the Junkers, or Prussian nobles, and trained them in state military academies. Since the corps was formed from lists of the established nobility, by the early 18th century, the officer-corps had come to form an estate, with its own social, economic and professional interests. Opposed to the military estate were the middle class and the peasantry. The military also performed many of the higher civil service functions.<sup>29</sup>

The national ideology of this military state consisted of honor-possessed only the nobility, who would make personal sacrifices for the state, and never by the bourgeoisie who were moved only by material considerations. The function of the bourgeoisie and the peasants was to produce and pay taxes. Some non-noble officers entered the army during the Seven Years War but most of them were cashiered when they were no longer needed. Proprietary regiments dwindled considerably in number before the French Revolution.<sup>30</sup>

The Prussian army grew from 2,000 mercenaries in 1640 to 83,000 mixed troops in 1740. Recruiting in Prussia was by district. Each regiment drew its recruits from a designated district. One-third of the

troops were Prussian nationals by law. The actual count of native Prussians troops increased towards the end of the 18th century. The remainder of unit strength was raised by the most curious and violent methods. In 1756, Saxon troops from the Saxon army were incorporated directly into Prussian units. Whole battalions of Austrian deserters were brought under Prussian command. Individual mercenaries, deserters and prisoners of war were similarly drafted. Prussian commanders recruited from the civilian population of conquered territories. Native Prussians conscripts were usually released after a two month spring drill for the purpose of carrying on productive work.<sup>31</sup>

At the beginning of the War of Austrian Succession, Austria possessed a backward, almost medieval administration. Clearly inspired by the Prussian example, Maria Theresa set about organizing a modern administration. All Hapsburg lands were administered for war by a single ministry. Austria used large numbers of mercenaries from the usual sources but relied particularly on Croatian mercenaries who were raised by treaty.<sup>32</sup>

Modern historical trends had profound effects upon the mercenary phenomena. After 1750 larger armies appeared. The western world had not seen armies of 100,000 since Roman times, and rarely then. Regular conscription was a military feature in most countries, though the remote and mountainous preserves were still the source of generations of Swiss, Scottish, Savoyard, Piedmontese and Pyrenean mercenaries. A vigorous money economy, based on manufacture, extraction and trade built up the middle class. The great national bureaucracies, usually the creatures of the King, but in the case of England, responsive to the Parliament, grew and became the instruments of the absolute state. War had become costly

and the affair of the whole state, too important to be left to Kings or condottieri. One observer summarizes the result: "The complex endeavors of the absolute state to disintegrate feudal liberties and achieve control of the armed forces fill several centuries. It was necessary to transform the armed forces from private enterprises of speculators and military entrepreneurs into public organizations, financed, controlled and equipped by the state and commanded by a reliable nobility."<sup>33</sup>

Mercenaries and their low level military commander are termed the horizontal dimension of the mercenary phenomenon. This aspect has changed little throughout the centuries, persisting to the end of this period. This dimension grew in numbers when there were wars to be fought for money and diminished during the winters and in times of peace. These mercenaries were recruited directly by the army commanders, were contracted for from war entrepreneurs or were the product of treaties. They were usually professionals in war.

The vertical dimension of the mercenary phenomenon are the condottieri and the mercenary generals who usually owned their men and equipment. They often performed all the functions of government and in rare cases, came to possess territory. They were masters of the military profession, possessed sound political and diplomatic abilities and had all the instincts and acquisitiveness of a businessman. The vertical dimension of the mercenary phenomenon ended with the Thirty Years War and the death of such men as Wallenstein, Tilly, Mansfeld and Bernard de Saxe-Weimar.

Such many faceted men could not succeed in an age of specialization. Recruiting became a state monopoly. Condottieri could not command national troops. The middle class devoted itself to making



money. The condottieri had not the time or the inclination for sedentary money making. In time the great bureaucracies began to provide standardized equipment on a large scale. As feudal patterns disintegrated and the centralized state took their place, professional and full time diplomats appeared. Generals came increasingly from an impoverished landed nobility that saw in battle its only salvation from a dull rural existence.

The cultural and social isolation of mercenaries was almost complete. The extreme variety of national origins contributed to this isolation and the indiscipline and spoils of the mercenary system completed it. Ransom and pillage were constant practices but with the injection of religious differences into 16th and 17th century warfare, wanton killing and destruction became typical. The frequency of siege warfare, with mercenaries on the inside and the outside and therefore the threat of pillage from the besiegers and the reality of it from the defenders can only have increased isolation.

The condottieri, if they chose to be, as Wallenstein and Bernard Saxe-Weimar did, became highly influential politically. Wallenstein literally held the balance of military and therefore political power in the Holy Roman Empire. He carried out his politics in a sophisticated manner. Bernard de Saxe-Weimar was less of a statesman but his strong dynastic ambitions led him to assume an influential political as well as military role. Mansfeld was a condottieri devoid of political loyalties, usually spending his winters going from one seat of power to another bargain shopping. With the exceptions of Wallenstein and possibly Tilly, the condottieri were not part of the councils of state and rarely dealt directly with the King or Emperor.

The vertical dimension did not exist in the English and French armies. English mercenaries were officered on the continent by Englishmen and were physically and in every other sense isolated. The mercenary elements of the Royalist and Huguenot sides were not subject to religious or national qualifications and behaved in the same manner as mercenaries everywhere. The people they were fighting for meant little to them and their cultural, social and political isolation was nearly complete. These mercenaries were officered by Royalist and Huguenot commanders.

Autonomy, of all the components both necessary and relative, underwent the greatest changes during this period. By the 16th century, the quid pro quo accommodations of Renaissance warfare had become a serious matter of life and death. The battles between Swiss and landesknachts were of the most violent and merciless kind. Firearms were coming into common use and the religious ideology of warfare was building up to the unrelenting fury of the Thirty Years War. Nevertheless, pay was the prime consideration in achieving autonomy of the hirer. As soon as their pay fell more than a few months in arrears, mercenary soldiers would desert. Condottieri might wait out the season, then look for a better bargain. The real issue between Ferdinand and Wallenstein was one of autonomy. Ferdinand could not make do without the money and army of Wallenstein. Wallenstein's dilatory tactics, establishment of magazines, financial organization and massive recruiting were probably designed to retain his own independence of action and make the Emperor beholden to him. It was only when Wallenstein's drive for autonomy appeared to exceed his loyalty to the Emperor that a plausible case for treason could be made against him and his downfall brought about.<sup>34</sup>

The later mercenaries expressed their autonomy by deserting. Frederick the Great's armies had elaborate means for preventing desertions. Units were recruited from the same district and never broken up to meet contingencies. Night battles and marches were minimized. Native troops were released for the harvest. Plundering or breaking out of line was punishable by death. French units had the same problem but to a lesser degree. British units serving overseas had it not at all. Desertion in a foreign country was a dangerous undertaking.<sup>35</sup>

After the Thirty Years War remaining feudal institutions disintegrated. Mercenary autonomy came practically speaking to an end. The proprietary regiments still felt a degree of independence and were not completely subject to the chain of command. This institution was all but non-existent by the revolution. The English, as they often do, place themselves outside this generalization. The feudal system of purchasing commissions was completely abolished in their army only in 1871. In France and England, the demise of the condottieri and the rise of bureaucracies, or, the placing of responsibilities combined in the condottieri in a number of agencies, was the method through which the state gained complete control of its armies. Prussia presents a somewhat different case inasmuch as the army and, therefore, the nobility also controlled the bureaucracy. But here we are speaking of national, conscript armies with an ever decreasing mercenary content.<sup>36</sup>

Professionalism grew throughout this period. The condottieri and the vast bulk of individual mercenaries were professionals in their respective military functions. The primary agencies of this professionalism are twofold. The establishment of officer academies in France and Prussia in the early 18th century and the regularization of drill and

training of the troops are paramount. Secondly, the numerous functions of supply, provisioning, uniforms, arsenals, billeting, inspections and to a degree diplomacy and politics were no longer the concerns of the army, but the central bureaucracies. It was possible for commanders to concentrate on purely military matters.

Religious scruples had singularly little influence in mercenary armies. Those armies with an ideological qualification were usually not mercenary. Condottieri and mercenary ideology remained indistinguishable from monetary or dynastic desires during this period. The ideological component of the mercenary phenomenon is seen in those who were not mercenary. All three major states exempted the productive strata from conscription. Frederick the Great required native conscripts to return to the fields after two months drill. In England, voters, that is to say those who met property qualifications, were not conscripted. The feudal ideological remnant of honor was the basis of social cohesion of the officer corps of impoverished nobles. Some of these were proprietary regimental commanders or foreign born mercenaries. In the words of one observer: ". . . recruits were provided by those isolated individuals whose absence would inconvenience nobody."<sup>37</sup>

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

One hears complaints of the enervation and demoralization of the people. Nothing has contributed more to this than standing armies which have killed national and military spirit. These armies are more an imaginary than a real force (Gniesenau, Chief of the General Staff, 1807).

Since 1815 western Europe has known mercenaries for their exotic and spectacular role projected into the popular mind without fully perceiving that mercenaries were creatures of the past. One could say that they had good press. The principal question for military planners after Napoleon was how to integrate them into the new national armies. Their very numbers and anonymity before this time were the cause of their banality just as their rarity in the contemporary world is the reason for their fascination. European mercenaries are now found only in the French Foreign Legion.

In terms of social and political isolation and almost complete governmental autonomy the French professional army of the 19th century comes closest to the classic mercenary army while still retaining its national character. Ideologically the army felt itself to be mercenary. The German army, however, did not lose its integral and dominant position in society and was ideologically more truly an army of the people than the French Army. The British army remained what it had always been but evolved into a more democratic and humane form. In times of war the



British Army more than the French or German was a popular army which capitalized on the energies of the people.

Perhaps the most interesting change of this period is in the meaning of the word mercenary. It was no longer a generic term describing an objective phenomenon. There was no longer an objective phenomenon to describe. Emptied of its objective content, mercenary is now a term of condemnation and opprobrium.

### France

The French Foreign Legion was established and organized in 1831. The Legion's mission was by law to fight France's foreign wars. The laws also prohibited the legion from fighting in metropolitan France, though this aspect of the Legion's mission was struck down when France fought defensive wars on the continent.<sup>1</sup>

The Legion was deliberately organized as a mercenary force. Its officers were usually but not always French. Enlistments were for five years and were anonymous. No verification of names or past history was required.<sup>2</sup>

Legion strength has varied from two to six thousand infantrymen and engineers since it was founded. It is usually employed as an auxiliary force of one or two regiments forming part of a larger force. The Legion has participated in almost all continental and colonial wars in which France has taken part since 1831. Legionary strength compared to total French strength in the Franco-Prussian and First World Wars, 5,000 versus 300,000 and 1,500,000 respectively, show its true perspective and military insignificance.<sup>3</sup>

The mercenary phenomenon does not end with the disappearance of mercenary armies and condottieri. The necessary components of isolation, autonomy and money and the relative components of professionalism and ideology extend to the mass conscript and professional armies of modern times. An analysis of this type is not to create mercenaries where none existed before but to show that an army which thinks of itself as mercenary loses a great part of its effectiveness. Subjective mercenarism is a modern phenomenon, an example of which is the French Army of the 19th century. The French may not have a monopoly on subjective mercenarism but certain writers have gone deeply into the problem in the French Army.<sup>4</sup>

Subjective mercenarism has two sources. First, and peculiarly French is the revolutionary heritage which formed the backdrop for subsequent development. Napoleon spread the revolution throughout Europe. His armies of the people were victorious everywhere. His era gave momentum to the republican and parliamentary movement, freeing the political energies of classes which had never before participated in politics. The revolution was deepest and most pervasive in France. In the Napoleonic armies every class was represented. The revolutionary armies were truly representative of the whole people in their victories over the mercenary armies of Prussia, Austria and Russia.<sup>5</sup>

With the restoration came the beginnings of the professional army that was called La grande neutte (the great mute) and which had the power to intervene in politics but rarely did so and then to a degree below its potential. This domestic restraint is the second source of the subjective mercenarism.

It was the expression of the military humiliations of the Crimean, Franco-Prussian and First World Wars, the long years of garrison duty during the 19th and early 20th centuries under successive governments and the peculiarly passive French concept of professionalism. This restraint resulted in an extreme isolation of the military from the national life and an almost absolute autonomy on the part of whatever government was in power. One French observer states that the final condition of the army was political in origin: ". . . the subordination of the military objective of national defense to the political objective of defense of the regime."<sup>6</sup>

The Crimean War was not a military defeat for the French so much a national scandal over the maladministration and casualties from disease. The defeats of the Franco-Prussian and First World Wars were not from financial neglect of the army or a lack of preparedness. They reflected the victory of Prussian staff planning and administration as much as moral defeats for a substantial French army.<sup>7</sup>

The peaceful years of a peaceful century were not without dynamism in civil-military relations. Between 1815 and 1939 there were three republics, two monarchies and a dictatorship in France. The strength of the army, the political rights of the military and the composition and roles of the regular and reserve forces and militia were subjects of continual parliamentary debate.<sup>8</sup>

During the early years of the restoration, service was voluntary. Recruits were so few that Louis XVIII filled his personal guard with Swiss mercenaries. By 1818 conscription was enacted with allowance for substitution and in 1852 by a simple payment to the government in

lieu of personal service. For a short period after the revolution in 1848, these abuses were suppressed. The terms of service changed four times from 1818 to 1870. Between 1832 and the Crimean War the terms of service were three years in the regular army and four in the reserve. In 1870 the total was increased to nine years with five in the active army. The army was used from time to time for police duties at the side of the militia. The short active term regular army met its defeat at Sedan in 1870 with the failure to mobilize an essentially amorphous reserve rapidly enough to meet the Prussians. The long term regular army was unable to drive the German army from France in the First World War.<sup>9</sup>

This instability in the military system had inhibiting effects on political expression in the officer corps. The police on occasions escorted new conscripts to their barracks. The military was not allowed to vote during the third republic and partisan activity of any kind including party affiliation was prohibited in general. Many officers were reluctant to show their political preferences or enter into political discussions. On occasions officer files showing political preferences were maintained. Thus the military individually as well as corporately was unable to express its preferences. Service was considered a strictly contractual matter with strict obedience rendered for material advantages. The army was publicly denounced and frequently called mercenary. A social, political and even physical barrier existed between the army and the nation. The army had come to consider itself a sort of civil service, with little concern with the glory of France or ability to sacrifice for it.<sup>10</sup>

The process of creating the subjective mercenary was completed by the civil servant concept of military professionalism. With few exceptions French officers shunned even the expression of a personal political opinion, much less the opposition to a policy they considered bad. They did not see themselves as constructive critics but as technical executors. Their isolation was extreme and civilian autonomy was hardly contested. At one point the army took a vigorous stand. The professionals considered the integrity of the army worth the sacrifice of Captain Dreyfus, creating a national issue out of the trial of the alleged spy and going to the extent of forging documents to prove their case. There is great irony in the observation that monarchic Prussia with its powerful feudal vestiges was able to appropriate the revolutionary institutions created by France and ultimately defeat her on the battlefield.<sup>11</sup>

#### Prussia

Prussia immediately set about reforming the national institutions that had led to the double defeats at Auerstadt and Jena in 1806. The diagnosis of the reformers was that the mixed system of mercenaries and longterm cantonal conscripts, replete with exemptions and in which the bourgeoisie only marginally participated had left a gulf, where popular support was needed, between the army and the rest of the nation. In 1812 the reformers recommendations were adapted when exemptions and corporal punishment were abolished and volunteer and militia units were formed. The mixing of regular, volunteer and militia units was a liberal and popular measure of the first magnitude. With it came a liberalization of the harsh discipline of the mercenary army. The defeatism and apathy of 1806

had been replaced by a fervent national spirit in 1812; the nation in arms.<sup>12</sup>

This compulsory service was ratified in the law of 1814. It was not strictly applied in practice again until 1860 when the possibility of war arose with the French. The system of recruiting for a two or three year term, depending on the imminence of war was the foundation of the Prussian system of national mobilization for the wars of 1866 against Austria, the Franco-Prussian and First World Wars.<sup>13</sup>

The organizational genius which made the Prussian war machine efficient and the model of all continental powers was the general staff. The general staff epitomized the logic of bureaucracy. The entire nation was subordinated to the mobilization and support of the army. Planning and administration became the key to success. The gaining of a few days in the concentration of the armies was the margin of victory. Prussia mobilized 250,000 regulars and reserves in five weeks in 1866 and 380,000 in 18 days with an additional 90,000 some days later in 1870.<sup>14</sup>

The mercenaries of the Prussian army were replaced by a popular conscript army and militia. There remained a substantial degree of social and cultural isolation of the officer corps but considerably less than in the 18th century. The enlisted ranks and more gradually the officer corps became representative of the society as a whole. As always the military exerted great influence in the political realm. Indeed autonomy was only an issue between the professional army and the militia which was a creature of the middle class.

#### Great Britain

Great Britain's insularity, colonial interests and parliamentary government caused her to delay almost a century in acquiring the

institutions of military efficiency on the Prussian model. The same factors caused her army to be the most humane and democratic. Great Britain used mercenaries on a large scale on the continent in the 18th century. The last continental mercenaries were the 30,000 Hessians used in the American Revolution. Thereafter, she used colonial mercenaries in the colonies except for two Indian divisions which fought on the European front in World War I.<sup>15</sup>

It was not until 1890 that the British Army had a commander in chief. On the eve of World War I a general staff was established. This staff was purely advisory to the government and to the Committee of Imperial Defense.<sup>16</sup>

The democratization of the British Army was more real and meaningful for the individual than in the Prussian or French armies. Administrative and judicial rights were accorded the soldier in the mid 19th century. In 1868 flogging was abolished in peacetime, bounties for recruits were abolished and bad characters were discharged. During World War I the Suspension of Sentences Act was passed, allowing soldiers under sentence to have their sentence put aside for good service in combat. Such was the progressiveness of the British Army that women were used for the first time in the First World War. While the landed aristocracy was the main source of British officers, the officer corps was not as exclusionary as the Prussian or French. The feudal concepts of honor and courage had not become a fetish. The British officer corps has been described as a branch of the civil service as opposed to a caste system as in Prussia or a separate profession as in France. The regular army and militia were represented in Parliament by a scattering of regular

reserve, militia or retired officer members. The contribution of the press during the Crimean War, where the press reported upon the incompetence and maladministration resulting in excessive casualties from disease, deserves note. The press' influence led to reforms in the army and was a strong democratic step for the times.<sup>17</sup>

The last vestige of the essentially mercenary purchase system disappeared from the British army in 1870 when the purchase of infantry and cavalry commissions was abolished. The Duke of Wellington argued in Parliament as late as 1850 that the purchase was the only adequate protection against a mercenary army which had no vested interest in the Empire.<sup>18</sup>

The British Army was not a state within a state. It was not isolated from the rest of society. The stability and wide acceptance of the government rendered meaningless any threat of military control or coup d'etat. Government autonomy over the military was not an issue. Military ideology appears to reflect the traditional British values of parliamentary democracy.



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## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

The mercenary phenomenon is part of war. Many wars take place without mercenaries. There are, therefore, special conditions which sustain the mercenary phenomenon and others that cause its extinction. The essence and role of mercenaries are closely related and complex. They have to do with the necessary components of isolation, autonomy and money and the relative components of professionalism and ideology. In general, the essence of mercenary is present in any mercenary situation and becomes more clear in comparison with successive situations. The role of mercenaries depends upon the balance in a given period of the five components.

#### Money

The monetary component takes on a dominant importance among the other components as a result of these investigations. Money seems to have the capability of creating mercenaries when the components of isolation and autonomy are present. Mercenary service becomes the avenue out of a hopeless existence. Money causes the mercenary to risk life and limb in a doubtful foreign venture in which he has no personal interest. Monetary considerations are a constant theme in the history of mercenarism. Men who could secure their livelihood by other means would not agree to serve in the front lines of a Greek phalanx, in a Carthaginian formation at Zama, in a Swiss pike unit or in one of Frederick the Great's columns. This choice of the monetary option seems to be the essence of mercenarism.

### Autonomy

Money alone has been insufficient to keep men faithful to a choice made in desperation. Employers almost universally recognized the need to retain autonomy in their hands through some system of control. The Greeks limited the mercenaries in their order of battle to approximately one-third or less. The Carthaginians possessed autonomy when their armies of mercenaries fought overseas. When the mercenaries appeared in North Africa during the African War and at Zama, autonomy passed to the mercenaries. The brutal discipline of the Prussian army, with no night marches or attacks, no independent unit operations and the death penalty for looting show the control measures the Prussians deemed necessary to preserve autonomy. The British in the early modern period did not commit the error of the Carthaginians of allowing mercenaries on their soil. Autonomy of the employer is thus an essential condition of the mercenary phenomenon.

### Isolation

Isolation is the independent variable of the mercenary phenomenon. As isolation is increased, the necessity of control measures to preserve autonomy is decreased. The lesson of history seems also to be that when the degree of isolation was insufficient, mercenaries would frequently exercise their option to tip the balance of power in their favor and improve their lot. The Carthaginians lost physical isolation and probably to a degree social isolation from their mercenaries when the latter gathered in North Africa. Mercenaries of the late middle ages, Renaissance and early modern period were seldom physically isolated from their employers but they were generally socially, culturally and

politically isolated. This often came about as a result of the depredations of ecorcheurs and routiers who were hardly distinguishable from bandits. These activities favored the employers' policies of preserving isolation of mercenaries.

The period of least isolation of mercenaries was the Renaissance. Here we find the double liabilities of mercenaries of the dynastic impulse among condottieri and the strong tendency to the cultivation of the art of war for its own sake instead of for the defeat of the enemy. An example of almost complete isolation, socially, culturally, economically and politically is the French Foreign Legion.

#### Professionalism

Ancient mercenaries were professionals. They were well versed in organization, tactics and leadership. There is little evidence to suggest that citizen soldiers were more effective. This professionalism reasserted itself at the close of the middle ages when the military advantages of mercenary armies over the feudal array became apparent. Some five hundred years later the new professionalism of conscripted, national armies led to the demise of mercenary armies. The signal that mercenarism was to give way to more efficient means of warfare was the disappearance of the condottieri about 1650 in response to the appropriation of their functions by the new centralized, national bureaucracies which established academies and standardized equipment, supply and administration. This new professionalism was prefigured in the national conscript regiments of Gustavus Adolphus and the New Model Army of Cromwell.

### Ideological

The ideological component of mercenarism is best seen in what caused mercenaries to disappear. There is little if any information on what impelled mercenaries to fight, other than purely monetary considerations. With the rise of nationalism and the spread of political rights into more strata of society after the French Revolution, mercenaries practically disappeared. In essence they had priced themselves out of the market because they now had an ideology instead of just money to fight for. This again is part of the essence of mercenarism.

Nationalism and professionalism had certain drawbacks related to the mercenary theme. Conscript armies were difficult to use in the limited imperial wars of the 19th and 20th centuries. The French Foreign Legion took part in distant ventures where the raising of national troops might also raise political issues. The mercenary nature of the Legion provided autonomy and isolation. Moreover, the French Army of the 19th and early 20th centuries adopted a sort of subjective mercenarism. Because it was closely subject to governmental autonomy and lived in isolation from the national political, social and cultural life, the French army opted for a certain professional passivity which did not exploit the national energies of the people and which resulted in a relative military inefficiency.

In summary it may be stated that at the core of mercenarism is the idea that men become mercenaries because their isolation and powerlessness leaves them no choice other than risking their lives for money. As soon as they find another option, they exercise it and cease being mercenaries. The role of mercenaries is seen in their professional

advantage over the feudal array and in their displacement by the even more dedicated and motivated soldiers of the professional conscripted armies.

There is a cyclic feature to the mercenary phenomenon. Men may cease being mercenaries when they acquire political influence. When they acquire economic power as well, they frequently restart the mercenary cycle by employing mercenaries to defend their interests. This feature is seen in certain Greek and Renaissance city-states, in the French Foreign Legion and in the British practice of hiring continental mercenaries.

The term "mercenary" has two meanings. The first is an essentially technical and generic use of the term in history to describe those troops or armies who possess the characteristics of operating in isolation from, but under the autonomy of their hirers for money, are professional and have little ideological interest in the objectives of the war in which they are fighting. The second is a non-technical, almost colloquial use to cast opprobrium upon soldiers or armies who possess some but not all of the mercenary components.

The conclusions of this treatise are based on an ample number and variety of sources. Nevertheless, the treatise merely gives a glimpse of a pervasive and real yet multiformed area of human activity. In order to add depth, comprehension and refinement to this subject, it will be necessary to extend its scope beyond the western tradition to colonial manifestations and mercenaries in the great contemporary and historical civilizations of the five continents. It will be further necessary to explore basic materials in diaries, correspondence, periodicals and other books in a variety of languages.

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